Reserve your FREE upgrade now!!

Launches 29 July... DON'T MISS OUT

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SPEED-CLEAN YOUR PC

FOR FREE

FASTEST ways to optimise your system without cutting corners page 38

- ✓ CCleaner boxes to untick
- ✓ Best time to defrag
- ✓ Default settings to tweak
- ✓ Clean without clicking
- ✓ Blitz duplicate files
- ✓ Downsize Windows
- ✓ Select specific drives
- ✓ Deep-scan in seconds
- ✓ Smart right-click shortcuts

...and much more!

+ What you must *never* clean

PLUS

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Plus photos and music too **p64**

TRACK ANYTHING LIVE ON THE WEB
Planes, boats, trains – even sharks! **p46**

dun, dun... dun, dun...

only **£2.00**

Faster than the speed of wipe

My home PC is so coated with dust that if I left it in the street, passing wags would scrawl "clean me!" and "also available in black" in the grime. I know I should give the case a good scrub, but then I'd have to pull out the tower from its nook and wipe the whole thing, and frankly that's just too much hassle.

Cleaning what's inside your PC can also seem like a tedious and time-consuming task, even though tools such as CCleaner do the hard work for you. In this issue's cover feature (page 38), we reveal how to speed up the PC-optimisation process without compromising the thoroughness of the clean, so you can get on with other things – such as dusting!

Sadly, it doesn't look like Windows 10 will come with self-cleaning abilities, although we now know it will arrive on 29 July. Turn to page 8 for the latest news about the new operating system or, if you're sick of hearing about it, find out how to track sharks on page 46.

Robert Irvine
robert_irvine@dennis.co.uk
#webuser

ISSUE 373   **17 - 30 JUNE 2015**   **ON THE COVER**

5 Things you'll learn this issue

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2 How to perform everyday tasks on your PC using only your voice
        page 27

3 How to use animated GIFs to convey your emotions in Gmail messages
        page 30

4 How to stop Adobe software secretly collecting information about you
        page 48

5 How to back up files on your Android tablet to an external hard drive
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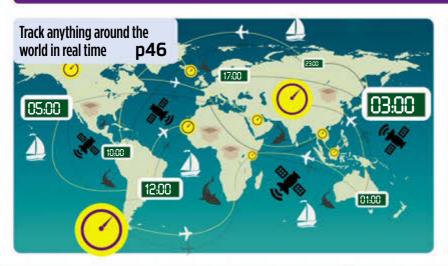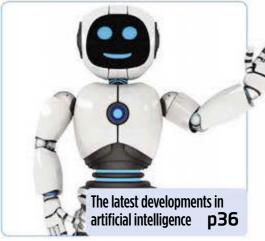
SPEED-CLEAN YOUR PC
FOR FREE
Take the hassle and tedium out of PC maintenance

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Track anything around the world in real time   **p46**

The latest developments in artificial intelligence   **p36**

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Practical WebUser
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Store more photos with FotoFox **p54**

Make your website display on any device **p58**

Go deep-sea diving in Street View

You can get up close to humpback whales, great white sharks and sea turtles – no snorkel required – in Google's new collection of Street View imagery. It assembles underwater photos from over 40 locations worldwide, including the Cook Islands in the South Pacific, where the whale in the main screengrab was seen. In Australia, divers went eye to eye with sharks, albeit protected by a cage (see screengrab, right), while sea turtles were photographed near the Solomon Islands. There are also stunning images taken off the shores of the Bahamas, American Samoa and Bali, where the sunfish, the world's heaviest bony fish, was spotted (it's a bizarre-looking creature, too: bit.ly/sun373).
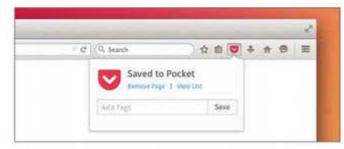
Google put the new images online to mark World Oceans Day (www.worldoceansday.org) on 8 June, hoping they will "inspire people to learn more about this precious natural resource". The images help the conservation of underwater environments because each one is recorded using GPS, allowing researchers to measure how conditions change over time. Click the link below to go to Google's Lat-Long blog, where you'll find more information on the company's projects to help preserve the oceans, and shortcuts to the best images. bit.ly/oceans373

Use read-it-later service Pocket in Firefox

bit.ly/firefox373
Pocket (https://getpocket.com), which lets you save web content to read later, is now available built into Firefox, eight years after it launched as an add-on for the browser. When you next see something online you want to read or watch later, click the Pocket icon in the Firefox toolbar (see screengrab). It will then be synchronised across all the devices with which you use Pocket – PC, phone and tablet. There is a catch, though: for the moment you'll have to change Firefox to 'US English'. Hopefully 'UK English' will be added soon. Read the Pocket blog for more info: bit.ly/pocket373.

Zoom into the world's largest photograph

www.in2white.com
At first glance, beyond its outstanding beauty, there doesn't seem to be anything special about this photo of Mont Blanc, the highest mountain in the Alps. It's only by zooming in that you'll see how incredibly detailed it is. In fact, when it went online in late May, it became the world's largest photo, comprising an eye-boggling 365 gigapixels, 45 more than the previous record holder – a view of London taken in 2012 from the top of the BT Tower (http://btlondon2012.co.uk).
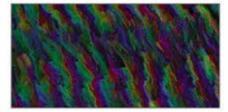
It's hard to know where to start when you first see the photo, so we suggest clicking the bottom-left 'Tour' button, which zooms you into the mountaineers (see smaller screengrab) and skiers hidden deep within the photo. For more info on this "brave, crazy and ambitious" project, visit www.in2white.com/about.

We highlight 10 of the most amazing and amusing things you can do on the web this fortnight

Step into an iridescent puddle

bit.ly/puddle373

So now you know what an iridescent puddle looks like. It's a gorgeous Chrome Experiment from Chicago-based "internet artist" Ezra Miller (ezramiller.biz), who calls the swirling mass of colours "chromatic goo". Also check out his dazzling Experiment myshards.com, which makes it look like your screen has been shattered in the most beautiful way.

Watch live walrus cam from Alaska

bit.ly/walrus373

Ten years after it disappeared from the web, this walrus cam from Alaska's remote Round Island is back – and in HD. You can watch dozens of large male Pacific walruses relaxing on the beach while the females are off raising their pups. The webcam is part of the 'Pearls of the Planet' series from Explore.org, which also includes a puffin cam from Seal Island in Maine (bit.ly/puffin373). Click the 'live cams' tab at the top of Explore.org's homepage to see the rest.

Guess people's ages in Bing Images

www.bing.com/images

If you only ever use Google Images, you've now got a good excuse to try Bing's equivalent. Microsoft has added its 'How Old Do I Look?' age-guessing 'robot' to image results in the browser, though the company's co-founder may not approve that it ages him by seven years (see image). Hover over an image and you should see a 'HowOldRobot' icon appear top-right. Click it to reveal the person's age according to Microsoft. You can then click the result to go to the 'How Old' website: how-old.net.

See milestone pictures in the history of photography

bit.ly/photos373

This handsome fellow has a lot to answer for. By taking the world's first self-portrait in 1839, he invented a photo style that would eventually spawn the selfie phenomenon. It's one of 20 landmark photography 'firsts', as compiled by the blog PetaPixel. Highlights include the first aerial, colour and digital photos, taken in 1860, 1861 and 1957 respectively.

5 TO FOLLOW ON TWITTER

@GeoffreyMunn1
Thoughts of *Antiques Roadshow*'s jewellery specialist and father of our very own Edward Munn!

@IL0VEthe80s
Misty-eyed nostalgia for chunky video recorders, cheesy US TV and early computer games

@SkypeSupport
Tips, advice and answers from Skype's technical support team

@TerryGilliam
Spiky reflections on life from the film director and Python animator

@MrRandomSilly
The name says it all – random, silly (and often very funny) videos from the web

Get live transport info in Google Maps

bit.ly/maps373

Google's Maps app for Android and iOS now shows live info for public transport in the UK, covering buses, trains and the London Underground. For more real-time tracking websites, turn to page 46.

Try Last.fm's new beta

bit.ly/last373

Last.fm's redesigned website is now available as a beta. Its homepage shows your tracks, albums, artists and events, and you click a new 'playbar' to listen to music.

Send Skype numbers from the web to phone

bit.ly/click373

You can now send phone numbers from a browser to your Android phone using Skype's 'Click to Call' plug-in, which lets you call the number without typing it. An iOS version will appear "in the future". See Skype's blog: bit.ly/skype373.

You can now 'reserve' your free Windows 10 upgrade

What happened?

Microsoft urged users of Windows 7 and 8 to "reserve" their free upgrade to Windows 10. If you're using Windows 7 or 8, you may have seen an icon of the Windows logo appear on your taskbar (see main screen grab). Clicking it brings up the message: "Windows 10 is coming. Get it for free!". Microsoft encouraged users to reserve their free copy in a blog post (bit.ly/blog373) that also announced the release date of Windows 10 as Wednesday, 29 July.

You may wonder why you need to reserve the upgrade when Windows 10 is software delivered over the web, so there's no chance of running out of copies. Microsoft has its own marketing reasons for prompting you to upgrade, but it's not just a promotional gimmick. By reserving a copy, you'll probably be able to download it just before 29 July, which will mean you won't need to compete for bandwidth with millions of other people on the release date itself. When that day comes, you'll just need to install the operating system.

Of course, only diehard Windows fans will be so eager to try the operating system (OS) on its first day of release. Many users will be happy to wait until the first bugs have been discovered and fixed before updating to a new operating system.

Windows 10 includes Solitaire as a built-in app, replacing the Windows 7 version

With the release now just weeks away, Microsoft has revealed more information about Windows 10's limitations by saying which features and software from older versions won't appear – details that may prove crucial to your decision of whether or not to upgrade.

For starters, Windows updates for Windows 10 Home users will be automatically downloaded and installed. It's generally good practice to have automatic Windows updates left on anyway, but for various reasons many people prefer to manage updates on their own. In the Home edition of Windows 10, that won't be possible.

Some software will be discontinued, including Windows Media Center (WMC), the Hearts card game and Windows 7's Desktop gadgets. The Windows 7 versions of Solitaire and Minesweeper will also be removed in Windows 10, but will be available in the new OS as built-in apps.

The demise of WMC means you won't be able to play DVDs on your laptop or PC unless you download separate software (see our round-up of the best alternatives to WMC in Issue 372).

Microsoft also revealed the price of the full OS, which you only need to pay if you aren't running Windows 7 or 8: $110 (about £72) for Windows 10 Home and $199 (about £130) for Windows 10 Pro.

How will it affect you?

You certainly don't need to reserve your Windows 10 upgrade; just make sure you install the new OS by 28 July, 2016, to get it for free. However, if you want to ensure you remember to upgrade before the big bandwidth crunch on 29 July, it's easy to make your Windows 10 reservation.

First, make sure you've installed the latest Windows updates on your machine (which you should be doing anyway). If you're running Windows Updates automatically, your OS should already be up to date. Next, click the Windows icon in the taskbar, then click 'Reserve your free upgrade'. You'll need to enter your email address.

At the end of July, your PC should automatically download the update, and give you a notification when it's ready to be installed. You'll still have to click to install it, so you needn't worry that it will update to the new OS without warning you. Your reservation can be cancelled at any time by clicking the Windows icon.

What do we think?

The Windows 10 reservation pop-up has confused many people. Microsoft really should have made it clearer why you would want to reserve a download, or offered an option to be reminded to upgrade when the time comes. The company needs to remember that what's best for its bandwidth and marketing is not necessarily what's best for its users. In any case, after the debacle that was Windows 8, many users may want to wait before upgrading, to see if the new OS is worth their trouble. However, we're optimistic that this will be one OS that Microsoft gets right. Roll on 29 July, so we can find out.

What we think of this fortnight's top tech news stories and rumours, and how they affect you

Android M to improve phone battery life

What happened?

Google revealed details of the next version of its Android mobile operating system, so far dubbed only 'M'.

The update comes a year after Android Lollipop, but it won't be fully released until later this year, though a preview is now available for developers. New features include built-in fingerprint scanner support, mobile-payment system Android Pay and a new battery-management system called Doze, which uses motion sensors to check when your phone is inactive and switch it to a power-saving mode. Important notifications will still arrive, but less important updates will be left until later. This change uses half the battery power of traditional standby.

Another notable feature is Google Now on Tap. Google Now is the system behind the smart cards that pop up on your phone, and Now on Tap extends it by letting developers use the smart assistant technology inside their own apps. So, if a friend messages you about going to a restaurant, Now on Tap could show directions or reviews inside the messaging app. To find the restaurant, you'll type where is this and Now on Tap will understand.

Google normally gives its Android OS versions a dessert-themed name, and is expected to reveal the full moniker when the software is rolled out in the third quarter of this year. Insiders suggest the name will be 'macadamia nut cookie', but we're hoping for something simpler – perhaps 'marshmallow'.

How will it affect you?

If you've got a fairly new handset, you should get an update to Android M this autumn. If you're using a Nexus-branded phone – the handsets approved by Google that run clean versions of Android without any additions – you can install the preview now. However, another two updates are due before final release, so it's worth waiting to upgrade. When it does arrive, the OS should boost your time between charges, improve privacy in apps and make the phone easier to use, thanks to Now on Tap.

What do we think?

Although Now on Tap sounds clever, it's the battery life enhancements that have got us excited. Smartphones don't last long enough between charges, and most new features in hardware don't help, such as bigger, brighter screens. Doze sounds like a smart way to extend battery life while retaining slimmer handsets and big displays.

Three breaks price promise

What happened?

Mobile operator Three last year promised not to increase prices during contracts, but it has now reneged on that pledge for new customers. A change in its terms and conditions in May means anyone who has joined the network after May faces annual rises based on inflation.

How will it affect you?

If you signed up for a Three contract before 29 May, your contract won't face the annual inflationary price hikes. But if you signed afterwards, or are on a pay-monthly deal, you still face an increase. The price hike is limited to the published inflation rate, so Three doesn't appear to be planning any additional increases.

What do we think?

It's a shame to see Three break its pledge. The UK has a competitive mobile market, but grabbing every small percentage increase won't boost customer loyalty. Three shouldn't be making promises it can't keep. It's worth noting that budget virtual network operator Tesco Mobile is keeping its promise not to raise prices mid-contract. We'd like to see Three stick to its pledge – and other operators to follow suit.

Chrome hits pause on Flash

What happened?

Google's Chrome browser will now 'pause' Adobe Flash on web pages, to reduce the amount of ads and other rich content that show automatically. Google hopes this will help cut the amount of power your laptop requires when browsing the web, so you can continue for longer between charges.

The Flash-pausing feature will soon be rolled out to Chrome on Desktop, but if you want it sooner, go to Settings, 'Content settings' in Chrome and select 'Detect and run important plugin content'.

How will it affect you?

Once this feature is live, it should mean your browsing is less of a drain on your battery.

Important content such as videos will still play as normal, but Flash animations will be paused. If you want to see Flash, just click the button to play.

What do we think?

It's a small but helpful change. We want to congratulate Google for making another smart improvement to keep us using our devices longer between charges. Chrome is a solid browser as it is, and it's good to see Google making small tweaks that are geared toward helping users rather than adding unnecessary features.

Apple Pay to launch in the UK in July

What happened?

Apple confirmed that its contactless payment system, Apple Pay, will be coming to the UK next month, just short of a year after it was launched in the US.

Apple Pay allows customers to make payments using their iPhone, iPad or the Apple Watch. The service is widely supported by all the major credit card companies and banks in the US, and McDonald's, Nike, Disney and Apple's own retail stores all accept payments via the cashless system. Many existing contactless payment systems will be adapted to support Apple Pay, allowing users to wave their handsets or watches over terminals to pay for goods.

The news comes amid reports that Samsung is set to launch Samsung Pay, which will be based on the same NFC technology as Apple Pay and support multiple bank and credit cards.

To make a payment, you swipe up from the bottom of the phone screen, select the card you wish to pay with and authenticate the purchase using the fingerprint reader. When paying in store, you simply tap the phone on the payment terminal. The watch-based system will presumably work in a similar manner, meaning you don't even need to remove your phone from your pocket or bag.

How will it affect you?

Hopefully the launch of these two major contactless payment systems will eventually mean less queuing in shops while the person in front of you fishes around for change. Whether you'll use Apple Pay or Samsung Pay yourself depends on how comfortable you feel paying for products and services in this manner. For every person who regards contactless payment as wonderfully fast and convenient, there's another who distrusts it for security reasons and the risk of buying things accidentally or while inebriated.

What do we think?

You wait a year for a contactless payment system, and then two come along (almost) at once, with several more on the horizon. We're seeing more shops, restaurants and ticket machines accepting payment in this manner, and their number is only likely to increase once Apple Pay reaches the UK.

Although we never leave the house without a few coins in our pocket for emergencies, it seems that cash is gradually being phased out, and being able to pay with our phones could mean we're soon leaving our wallets at home.

FIRST LOOK

Smart Tab Prime 6
bit.ly/vodafone373

Vodafone's new Smart Tab Prime 6, which costs £150 on pay-as-you-go, is just 7.9mm thick and weighs 406g. It feels relatively well-built and, thanks to its soft touch rear casing, is easy to hold for long periods of time. Unlike many of its rivals, the tablet also runs Android 5.0 Lollipop straight out of the box, which provides a clean and modern interface. However, other elements are less impressive.

For a 9.6in tablet, its 1,280 x 800 resolution screen is very low, equating to a pixel density of 157ppi. This may have been adequate a few years ago, but it's now on a par with budget smartphones such as Motorola's Moto G, which has a display almost a quarter of the size. The tablet's colour accuracy is also disappointingly low, covering only 58.5 per cent of the sRGB colour range with a very low peak-white level, which means photos can never look their best.

Performance is also unimpressive. The tablet's quad-core Snapdragon 410 processor is no faster than that of the Motorola Moto E smartphone, and its score on the BaseMark OS II benchmark test was almost half that of the Tesco Hudl 2. Web browsing was juddery and the tablet struggled to scroll through articles on the *Guardian* website that included embedded videos.

One redeeming feature is the Smart Tab's battery life. Its 4,600mAh battery achieved a respectable 8h 44m in a continuous video playback test,

meaning it should manage even the longest of journeys without being charged. Unlike most of its competitors, the Vodafone tablet also accepts a 4G SIM card, which is handy if you want to get online without a Wi-Fi connection. However, we'd rather go for a cheaper, better tablet such as the Hudl 2 and tether it to a smartphone.

? WHAT'S THE RUMOUR

Will the next Nintendo console run Android?

Although Nintendo has said that we won't hear any concrete details about its new console, currently code-named NX, until next year, a report from Japanese newspaper *Nikkei* suggests that the console will apparently break with Nintendo tradition and use Android as its main operating system. A Nintendo UK spokesperson told our sister website, Expert Reviews, that Nintendo "does not comment on rumour or speculation", but the company has since told the *Wall Street Journal* that "there is no truth to the report saying that we are planning to adopt Android for NX".

According to *Nikkei* (bit.ly/nikkei373) an unnamed source said: "[The NX's] operating system is loaded with Android," citing that it would help "speed up getting all game developers on board". The source also said that it would allow Nintendo to expand across multiple platforms, such as smartphones and tablets.

Previous Nintendo consoles have always used proprietary operating systems that have been developed in-house, but Nintendo might be adopting a Google-based OS because its current console, the Wii U, is not compatible with other game consoles. This makes it harder for developers to produce games for the Wii U that are also available for Xbox and PlayStation.

Nikkei has generally been quite reliable as far as Nintendo rumours go. Last year, the newspaper reported that Nintendo was planning to launch games for smartphones, which Nintendo promptly denied, only to announce its plans to do so in March.

LIKELIHOOD RATING
✓✓✓✓✓

Following the commercial failure of the Wii U, we wouldn't be surprised to see Nintendo changing its tactics by adopting an already popular operating system. However, moving to Android would hardly make the company's current situation any easier, because it would still be the only major console manufacturer running Google's operating system.

K What's new on Kickstarter
Our favourite new project on the crowdfunding site

Snail
bit.ly/snail373 | From €32 (£23)

Most phone chargers are quite bulky, but Snail reinvents the design to provide a pocket-friendly way to power your devices on the move.
Available in a choice of seven colours, Snail features a retractable 70cm cord with a micro USB or lightning connector, and a plug for its antennae that can be adapted for different countries. The creators, who are based in Edinburgh, are hoping to raise €100,000 (about £74,000) of backing for Snail's development, with funding set to close on 30 July.

WEBOMETER

WE LIKE...

⬆ **Apple launches music streaming service**
Apple has announced a music-streaming service to take on Spotify. Apple Music will feature a 24-hour radio station called Beats One, and will be available on Android as well as iOS devices. We'll be taking a closer look at it in our next issue.

⬆ **Wi-Fi to be used as power source**
US researchers have successfully harnessed the energy in ambient Wi-Fi signals to power a surveillance camera. The techniques discovered could enable a variety of low-powered devices to be powered wirelessly.

WE DON'T LIKE...

⬇ **PayPal users to receive marketing calls**
Following changes to its terms and conditions, PayPal has asked its customers to accept automated marketing calls, text messages and emails. Fortunately, the new agreement only affects US customers.

⬇ **Google self-driving car involved in accident**
Google's co-founder Sergey Brin revealed that one of its self-driving cars was rear-ended, taking the total number of road traffic accidents to 12 since the project began in 2009. See Barry's column on page 74 for more on this topic.

Stay Safe Online

News about the latest threats and advice from security experts

SECURITY ALERT! | What's been bothering us this fortnight

Macs affected by rootkit security flaw

A vulnerability in some Macs could allow attackers to install rootkit malware that can survive hard drive formatting and reinstallation of the operating system, according to security firm Symantec. The flaw, known as the Apple Mac OS X EFI Firmware Security Vulnerability, was first identified by security researcher Pedro Vilaca and affects some Macs' Sleep mode. When awoken from this state, the affected computers' flash protections are left unlocked, allowing attackers to install rootkit malware. Although it is unlikely to affect large numbers of users, Symantec has rated the flaw as critical because it provides attackers with persistent root access, which can be used to remotely control the system and steal data. Until the flaw is patched, Mac users are advised to shut their computers down rather than putting them to sleep.
bit.ly/apple373

One quarter of UK PCs affected by malware

In a recent report from PandaLabs, the security company found that more than a quarter of UK computers that have its products installed "came into contact with malware" in the first three months of 2015. It stressed, however, that not all of these systems were infected. In the same report, PandaLabs claimed to have identified more than 20 million new malware threats for the first quarter of 2015, although most of these were variants of existing malware. Trojans are currently the most common malware ahead of viruses, worms and adware. The global rate of infection was 36.51 per cent for the first quarter of 2015, meaning one third of all computers are potentially compromised.
bit.ly/malware373

Europeans at highest risk of Dyre attacks

Security firm Trend Micro has attributed the 150 per cent increase in Dyre malware infections in the first quarter of 2015 to the malware's new features that enable it to avoid detection. Europeans were at highest risk of being affected by Dyre, representing 39 per cent of all infections, while 38 per cent took place in North America. The malware, first uncovered in September 2014, is often delivered in spam emails using scare tactics about taxes. It can perform a range of attacks including taking browser screen grabs. Trend Micro warns users to be wary of emails about taxes or other banking matters and to avoid opening unsolicited attachments.
bit.ly/dyre373

Security Helpdesk | Your questions answered by security specialists

THIS ISSUE'S EXPERT:
Sean Sullivan, Security Advisor at F-Secure (www.f-secure.com)

Q **Are advertisers becoming more devious in the ways they harvest and use our data?**
David Manning, Twitter

A I wouldn't necessarily use the word 'devious'. Current ad technology is powered by data that can make comparisons about our behaviour. As time passes and we use more apps, we generate more and more data. This natural evolution makes it easier to use our data to fine-hone targeted ads.

However, we are rapidly approaching a point where this data can be used to unfairly target people with ads. In the same way that we ban subliminal advertising on television, we may soon need regulation to limit the real-time targeting of ads on our PCs and mobile devices. If advertising companies were to oppose such regulations, that really *would* be devious.

Q **Is using your phone or tablet abroad more trouble than it's worth?**
Reece Collins, Facebook

A We all want to relax when we travel, so bringing along our iPads, mobile phones or other devices to stay connected is convenient, and preferable to hauling a laptop around. But services such as online banks have their interests to protect, and their security procedures can lock you out of your own account without much notice. Travellers now need to be prepared for these events if they're expecting to access online banking or other services, while away from home.

I suggest using a VPN, such as F-Secure's Freedome (freedome .f-secure.com) to connect to the internet securely. This is as much about privacy as working around restrictions that stop you accessing some online services when you're abroad. Public Wi-Fi connections leave you so exposed that it's simply unsafe to use them without taking precautions. It's like travelling without insurance – you won't realise how important it is until it's too late.

Email us your security questions at webuser@dennis.co.uk

Power out. Game on.

BATTERY BACKUP HOME NETWORK

Simple, affordable power protection from APC™ by Schneider Electric™ keeps your computer, home entertainment systems, and WiFi connections safe and working, even if the power goes out.

Life Is On™

APC™

by Schneider Electric

Best New Websites

Site of the Fortnight

TECHNOLOGY NEW

Alphr
www.alphr.com

Technology websites often use a bite-size format to appeal to short attention spans, so we're delighted that this swish launch credits its visitors with more intelligence. Alphr combines in-depth news stories, reviews and analysis with insightful and sometimes provocative opinion pieces on topics ranging from 3D printing to online privacy. We particularly like the Hacks section, which suggests improvements to everyday things such as websites and chairs, and argues that cynicism about technology is both easy and lazy. Effortless to navigate, with an engaging design, Alphr could become your go-to source for tech news, reviews and views.

Our rating ★★★★★

Confessions of a tech nerd: Why I buy vintage

What brings a man to buy an obsolete 21in CRT Apple Studio Display? Christopher Phin explains the tech itch that won't go away
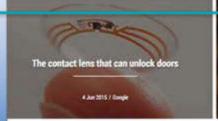
LIFE & CULTURE
Browse insightful content written *by* geeks *for* geeks

CES Asia 2015: Meet the $72,000 robot chef

Moley Robotics' robot chef can cook 48 recipes at the press of a button

THE FUTURE
Discover the exciting technology of tomorrow, today

Hands-o...

Google delivers th

The contact lens that can unlock doors

4 Jun 2015 / Google

ENTERTAINMENT

WOW247
www.wow247.co.uk

RELAUNCH

With this radical revamp, WOW247 has evolved from a mere listings site into an all-encompassing entertainment hub packed with great content. We love the stylish, image-led design and improved navigation that make it easy to find something to do, watch, eat, drink or read anywhere in the UK. New elements such as the Trending round-up of web videos and virals, and list-based articles such as '25 things to do for free in London' provide a contemporary feel, as does the responsive layout, which displays perfectly on any device. There are local insights and recommendations from bloggers, and the lively social accounts include Spotify playlists. Wow, indeed!

Our rating ★★★★★

100 best things to watch on Netflix

10 things to see at Edinburgh International Festivals

Welcome to the new WOW247?

Amanda Palmer on The Art of Asking

BECOME A BLOGGER JOIN IN. ADD YOUR VOICE TO WOW247.

POPULAR EVENTS
1 Hozier
2 Shrek - The Musical

10 of the best food channels to watch on YouTube

10 of the best beer gardens in London

TECHNOLOGY NEW
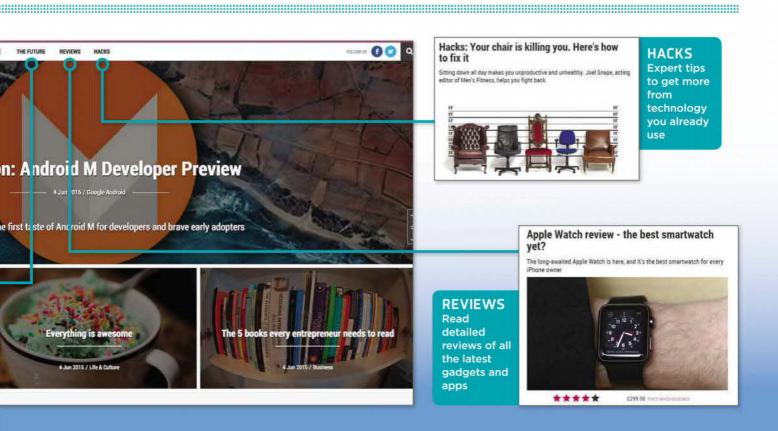
Google Jump
bit.ly/jump373

Hot on the heels of Microsoft's HoloLens website (reviewed in Issue 371) comes this promotional effort for Google's new virtual-reality system, Jump. The single-page site doesn't tell you a great deal, but features images of the formidable Jump rig, which consists of 16 camera modules "in a circular array". There's also a brief explanation of how individual Jump videos are assembled to create a seamless, 360-degree 3D panoramic film, although there's no demo of what this will look like. Still, with Jump set to come to YouTube soon, we expect to see more content imminently.

Our rating ★★★☆☆

Reviews by Robert Irvine

We review this fortnight's best new and relaunched websites and rate them for content, design and features

on: Android M Developer Preview

4 Jun 2015 / Google Android

the first taste of Android M for developers and brave early adopters

Everything is awesome

4 Jun 2015 / Life & Culture

The 5 books every entrepreneur needs to read

4 Jun 2015 / Business

Hacks: Your chair is killing you. Here's how to fix it

Sitting down all day makes you unproductive and unhealthy. Joel Snape, acting editor of Men's Fitness, helps you fight back.

HACKS
Expert tips to get more from technology you already use

Apple Watch review - the best smartwatch yet?

The long-awaited Apple Watch is here, and it's the best smartwatch for every iPhone owner

★★★★☆   £299.00 PRICE WHEN REVIEWED

REVIEWS
Read detailed reviews of all the latest gadgets and apps

FOOD   `NEW`

BBC Dish Up

www.bbc.co.uk/dishup

Dish Up is the BBC's new year-long culinary campaign to make cooking accessible and enjoyable for all. The website blends 'stress-free' recipes from BBC Food for dishes including bangers and mash with articles from iWonder on topics such as 'can cooking make you happier?'. The content is presented in a colourful, tiled format with lots of tasty photos and videos, across categories including Eat Better, Save Money and Lose Weight. More clips will be added once Dish Up TV shows are broadcast, but the site already looks promising and won't intimidate cooking novices.

Our rating   ★★★★☆

MOTORING   `NEW`

Rentecarlo

www.rentecarlo.com

The ingenious concept behind this site is that you can rent cars from private owners across the UK. Just search for a location to view available vehicles, find out how much they cost to hire and contact the owner. The FAQ answers questions about insurance, accidents and parking tickets (but not theft, oddly). Because it's a new service, many areas don't yet have any cars listed, but you can ask to be notified when they do. It's free to join and to list your own car, and could save you more than 30 per cent on traditional car rental. We love the punning name, too - Rentecarlo or bus!

Our rating   ★★★★☆

TRAVEL   `RELAUNCH`

Homestay

www.homestay.com

"Discover faces not empty places" runs the catchy new tagline for this 'hosted accommodation' site, which distinguishes it from rival Airbnb. It works in a similar way – you can search for a place to stay in more than 140 countries and liaise with hosts via message or video call to confirm availability and cost (you pay a 15 per-cent deposit upfront). The revamped site is bigger, friendlier and even easier to use, with lots of big photos of guests sharing a joke with their hosts, and a blog called Experiences that conveys the convivial spirit of Homestay. You can also become a host yourself.

Our rating   ★★★★★ ➡

✚ Tell us about your website via webuser@dennis.co.uk

⭐ Best New Websites

RELAUNCH

CLOTHING

Primark

www.primark.com

The discount-clothes chain store has revamped its website with a trendier, mobile-friendly design. It previously offered little more than a random selection of new stuff, but there's now a dedicated Products section where you can browse clothes, shoes and home and beauty products. Although you can view prices and photos, and add items to your favourites, you still can't buy anything online aside from gift cards. Instead, you can find your nearest store or just visit the Primania page to see 'looks' created and shared by Primark customers. The site is certainly a big improvement, but you'll need to brave a branch to shop.

| Our rating | ★★★★☆ |

NEW

TRAVEL

Austravel Us & Aus

bit.ly/austravel373

Where would you rather go: Scarborough in the north-east of England or Scarborough in Perth, Western Australia? Find out at this site from travel agent Austravel, which lets you compare UK towns with their namesakes Down Under. Just click a marker on the map of either country to view side-by-side imagery from Google Street View and other info, such as the current weather and facts about each place. If you prefer the sunny emptiness of Oz to the grey streets of home, you can then call Austravel to book a trip. It's a simple but fun idea that doesn't malign the UK but encourages you to experience the differences.

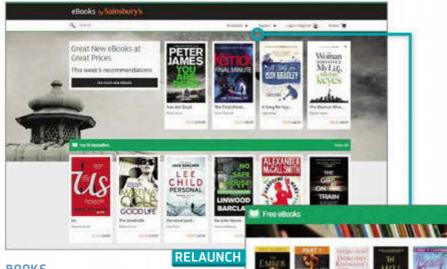| Our rating | ★★★☆☆ |

NEW

PETS

VetBox

myvetbox.com

A monthly subscription box containing treatments for fleas and worms might not sound very appetising, but it keeps your dog or cat healthy, which makes VetBox an excellent idea. It provides boxes of medicines and supplements, chosen by a professional vet and tailored to your pet's size, age and weight. There are three boxes to choose from, with the Premium and VIP options including extra gifts such as toothpaste and ear cleaner. Prices start at a reasonable £5.99 including delivery and you can cancel at any time. VetBox is friendly and easy to use, but warns that it's not a replacement for consulting your usual vet.

| Our rating | ★★★★☆ |

RELAUNCH

BOOKS

eBooks by Sainsbury's

www.sainsburysebooks.co.uk

Sainsbury's isn't the obvious store to buy ebooks from, but this relaunched site impresses with its smart design and varied selection. It's been streamlined to remove clutter and reduce the number of menu options, allowing you to focus on the books and only dip into sections such as Competitions and Book Club when you want to. You can browse titles by genre; filter them by price, latest releases and customer rating; and read online samples. Prices are fair (and you get one Nectar point for each pound spent), and there are some good free ebooks – not just the usual out-of-copyright titles. Books are in EPUB format which works on most e-readers apart from Kindles.

| Our rating | ★★★★★ |

RELAUNCH

BROADBAND

Direct Save Telecom

www.directsavetelecom.co.uk

This budget ISP has ditched its old site, which looked more like a collection of adverts, in favour of a bold, blue design that resizes automatically to fit your screen. All the important information about Direct Save's broadband packages is now placed upfront, including details of its cheap-as-chips £1.95 per month (plus line rental) deal, which includes a free router, free calls, unlimited usage and speeds of up to 17Mbps. There's also a useful comparison of its prices with those of other providers, including BT, TalkTalk and Virgin Media. It's just a shame that the low-resolution images drag down the otherwise fine design.

| Our rating | ★★★☆☆ |

NEW

SEARCH
Rummage4
www.rummage4.com

Rummage4 aims to improve your web searches by running them through Google and DuckDuckGo simultaneously. If that's not enough, you can add more search options including Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, or a site of your choice, though you can only search one of these at a time. Rummage4 also lets you search for three separate terms at once for more targeted results, which it describes as "the clever bit", though it's no different to putting a plus sign in front of words in Google. We like that you can use keyboard shortcuts for specific actions, but otherwise Rummage4 needs a bit more work to be truly useful.

NEW

MONEY
GetPaidTo
www.getpaidto.com

Many 'rewards' sites pay a pittance for your efforts, but GetPaidTo is impressively generous with its offers to make and save you money. There are cashback and voucher codes for thousands of big-name stores and services; surveys and tasks that pay you to complete them; and extra points (exchangeable for vouchers or further cashback) for watching videos and listening to the radio. There's a strong community feel with a regularly updated blog, a (rather quiet) forum and a live chat box that lets you talk to the GetPaidTo team and other users. The clean, colour-coded design is a far cry from the usual messy, ad-heavy layout of most rewards sites, and we like that you can earn points not just from referring friends but from their referrals, too.

Our rating ★★★★★

Our rating ★★★☆☆

➕ ALSO NEW

BOOKS
Daunt Books Publishing
www.dauntbookspublishing.co.uk
★★★☆☆
This sophisticated website tells you everything you need to know about the publishing arm of independent book chain Daunt Books. You can meet its authors, who include new and up-and-coming writers as well as literary greats such as Mark Twain and Virginia Woolf; browse its publishing catalogues (unfortunately, in PDF format); and subscribe to Daunt's mailing list

SOCIAL
Rise Above
riseabove.org.uk
★★★★★
From exam stress, body changes and fickle friends to peer pressure about smoking, drinking and sex, it's tough being a teenager. This site provides support and advice to young people from young people, making excellent use of videos and games to get its points across in a manner that doesn't patronise. The user comments certainly suggest it's hitting the right notes.

POETRY
The Poetry Society
www.poetrysociety.org.uk
★★★☆☆
The Poetry Society dates back to 1909, but its relaunched website is far from old fashioned. The fresh design combines a featured poem (Rupert Brooke's *The Soldier*, when we visited) with poetry news, tweets, details of events and a round-up of poetry competitions. We were only baffled by the coloured spots on the homepage.

FOOD
Moma Foods
momafoods.co.uk
★★★★☆
The breakfast brand that "makes oats more awesome" has given its website a colourful (mostly garish magenta) makeover. It certainly makes the pots of porridge and muesli feel exciting, especially in the vibrant Community section, where you can get ideas for tasty toppings and enter the monthly draw for a free MOMA breakfast.
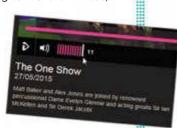
WEBSITE SECRETS

Discover iPlayer's Spinal Tap tribute

Ever noticed that when you increase the onscreen volume while watching a BBC iPlayer show, the slider goes past 10 to 11? Why 11? According to Richard D Titus, who helped design the iPlayer, this is an intentional reference to the "one louder" Marshall amplifier scene in the classic comedy film *This is Spinal Tap*. "At one point the head of iPlayer suggested removing it, saying it was silly," says Titus, "but we stood our ground and ended up with a volume reaching, in those critical moments where you just 'need a little more', up to 11!" (bit.ly/iplayer373). ◼

Build a Better Site

Specialist tips, top tools and practical help

Top Tips of the Fortnight

New 1&1 tool boosts websites

1&1 (www.1and1.com) has launched version 8 of its MyWebsite online web-building software with a brand new tool called the Online Success Centre. This aims to improve sites looking for local visitors by taking care of key elements such as contact details and the site's presence in directories such as Google Maps and Yelp. It also ties in with 1&1's SEO tools to make sure the site's content is tweaked to perfection. Prices start from £8.39 per month.

Webmaster Tools turn into Search Console

Google has renamed its Webmaster Tools to reflect the fact that it isn't only webmasters that use them. Now called Search Console, this should still be your first port of call if you want to know more about your site and how your visitors use Google's

search engine to find it. Even if you use statistical tools such as Google Analytics or WordPress Insights (see our Mini Workshop, below), the Search Console can provide plenty of information on how people get to your site that isn't available to these other services. You'll find the Search Console at bit.ly/search373.

Deal of the Fortnight

GoDaddy (uk.godaddy.com) is offering a domain, a website and email for £1.20 per month, if you sign up for 12 months.

Web-building Helpdesk

THIS ISSUE'S EXPERT:
Eugene Molari, Project Manager, Wholegrain Digital (www.wholegraindigital.com)

Q I am good at using themes and plug-ins to create sites for friends and small businesses, but what's the best way to learn how to create my own themes from scratch?
TheTechGuy, Web User Forums

A I remember being in your position – very exciting times. You don't have to start from scratch, you can use a starter theme such as 'underscores' (underscores.me, also known as '_s'), which gives you a 1,000-hour development head start because it's been created by pro developers. There is a very good step-by-step video tutorial on Lynda.com by Morten Rand-Hendriksen called 'WordPress: Building Themes from Scratch Using Underscores' (bit.ly/underscores373) that will introduce you to this theme. Have fun.

MINI WORKSHOP | Get more insight into your WordPress website
WordPress: wordpress.com/stats/insights | ⏱ 10 mins | Any WordPress site

WordPress has incorporated a new Insights tool into its existing Stats tools. It can help you publish posts and pages at optimum times, as well as providing data on visitor numbers and which pages they're looking at
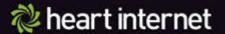
1 If your site is hosted on WordPress .com, just log in. For those with a self-hosted site, install the Jetpack plug-in (jetpack.me), which links your self-hosted site to a WordPress.com account. Go to wordpress.com and click My Sites. **1** Click Switch Site **2** to choose the one you want to look at, if it's not already selected.

2 Click Stats, **1** then Insights. **2** The new tools show when you made posts over the last few months, **3** colour coded for intensity if you make more than one post per day. It also lets you know when your site is at its busiest, providing details of the day of the week and the time of day. **4**

3 Click the Days, Weeks, Months and Years tabs **1** to see your site's stats over time. Hover over a column on the top chart to preview its information or click it to see the stats below. **2** You can also see which pages and posts have been popular **3** and where in the world your visitors come from. **4**

✚ Email us your website building questions at webuser@dennis.co.uk

Group Test

We test and compare the latest products

Home security cameras

Andy Shaw tests eight home security cameras that let you keep an eye on your property while you're away from home

Do you ever wonder what's going on in your house while you're away? Whether the kids have arrived home, what the dog is up to, or even if there's an intruder in the house? Installing a home security camera can set your mind at ease. The latest models can join your network using either Wi-Fi or Ethernet, so you can remotely view anything in their field of vision at any time from an app or web page. Some will even save recorded footage to online services, alert you of any movement in your property and pan and tilt on demand so you can see more of the room.

Y-cam HomeMonitor HD | £150 | www.homemonitor.me

FEATURES ★★★★★ **PERFORMANCE** ★★★★☆ **EASE OF USE** ★★★★★ **VALUE FOR MONEY** ★★★★★

WebUser GOLD AWARD

The HomeMonitor HD has been our favourite home security camera since it hit the shelves early last year. It has a motion sensor that triggers recording, and we love that the footage it captures is sent straight to a cloud-storage service, where it is kept for seven days, completely free of charge. If you want to keep footage beyond the week-long period, you can simply download the file to your PC.

Setting up the camera is very straightforward – you just plug the device into your router with the supplied Ethernet cable, then use a browser to connect to the camera and enter the settings for the Wi-Fi network. The HomeMonitor HD comes with a mounting plate that can be screwed into position, which means you can place it almost anywhere.

The camera records footage in 720p resolution and has good viewing angles. Its 30 infrared LEDs provide night-vision to a distance of 15 metres, which is enough for most homes. There is, however, no local storage, so if your internet connection goes down, the camera can't record anything that happens.

On the plus side, having no local storage means an intruder can't destroy footage of their activities by simply removing a memory card or stealing the camera. If they want to avoid being filmed, they'll have to cut your internet *before* getting caught on camera.

Y-cam's apps provide excellent support for its service. Android, iOS and Windows Phone all have their own software for changing settings on the device and viewing your cloud-based footage. There's also a Roku channel so you can see any captured footage on your TV, or you can access both saved video and camera settings on any other device through the standard website.

VERDICT
★★★★★

The HomeMonitor HD isn't especially cheap, but it lets you save your captured footage online for free, which the other cameras in this Group Test all charge extra for. You can view your captured video on a wide range of devices, including anything that can open a web page, and although the Y-cam's image quality wasn't the clearest in this test, it is good enough to see what's going on. It only saves motion-detected footage, though, so you can't record constantly.

D-Link DCS-5222L | £125 |
www.ballicom.co.uk

EATURES ★★★★☆ PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
EASE OF USE ★★★★★ VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★☆

Where the Y-cam HomeMonitor HD is fixed in place, the DCS-5222L has a pan-and-tilt mechanism that lets you scan a room even when you're not there. It's a larger, bulkier device but it takes great quality video footage, to a distance of 8m at night. You can set up the device using an Ethernet cable or via WPS (Wi-Fi Protected Setup), if your router is compatible.

There are apps for iOS and Android, but you'll need to go through the web-based interface to set up detection zones (areas where you want the camera to apply motion-detection). There's no cloud storage available, so no extras to pay, and all footage is saved to a microSD card inserted into the camera. You can also configure it to save to a NAS or use D-Link's video-recording software on its own network, though this means leaving the PC that's running it switched on.

VERDICT ★★★★☆
We love the DCS-5222L's pan-and-tilt function, which lets you scan a room remotely, and the quality of its footage is very impressive. However, its lack of free cloud storage means it misses out on the Gold Award.

D-Link DCS-2332L | £170 |
www.ebuyer.com

FEATURES ★★★☆☆ PERFORMANCE ★★☆☆☆
EASE OF USE ★★★★☆ VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★☆☆

None of the three award-winning cameras in this test is suitable for installing outside, although if you like our Gold Award-winner's cloud-storage option, the HomeMonitor HD Pro (£199, reviewed in Issue 350, bit.ly/webuser350) is worth a look.

Alternatively, D-Link's DCS-2332L is outdoor-ready and as easy to install as the other cameras we've reviewed here. Unlike D-Link's Silver Award-winner, it's a fixed camera, so you can't pan and tilt from its app. It doesn't have cloud storage either, and footage is recorded to a microSD card, NAS or an always-on computer that has the network-recording software installed.

The most disappointing thing about this camera is its image quality. The daytime footage appeared compressed, which made it difficult to pick out detail, and the night film suffered because the light from the infrared LED dropped off at around three metres, giving it poor range.

VERDICT ★★★☆☆
The DCS-2332L is a reasonable camera for outdoor use. However, its image quality was disappointing, particularly compared to D-Link's Silver Award-winning DCS-5222L, which took much clearer footage.

Philips In.Sight HD | £130 |
www.currys.co.uk

FEATURES ★★★★☆ PERFORMANCE ★★★★☆
EASE OF USE ★★★★★ VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★☆☆

Setting up this Wi-Fi camera couldn't be simpler – you just scan a QR code created automatically within its Android or iOS app.

Image quality is good but slightly washed-out in daylight, although the camera manages to capture lots of detail and is also good at night.

The In.Sight HD's online service lets you monitor your camera for free and sends you alerts if the motion or sound detection is triggered. However, if you want to save the footage online, you'll need to pay: the Silver subscription will save your videos for seven days and costs £7.99 per month; but if you want a longer period, you can opt for the Gold subscription, which stores footage for 30 days and costs £27.90 per month. There's no memory-card slot for local storage so you have to subscribe if you want to do more than watch live images.

VERDICT ★★★★☆
The In.Sight HD is an impressive security camera that has particularly good image quality, but it's not great value for money, especially if you want to keep your recorded footage for more than a week.

BEST OF THE REST

Foscam FI9826P | £114
www.broadbandbuyer.co.uk | ★★★☆☆
This pan-and-tilt camera has an optical zoom you can control from the Android or iOS app, but the app and the web interface are tricky to set up and use. Video is recorded to a microSD card with no online storage option.

BT Smart Home Cam 100 | £80
www.shop.bt.com | ★★★☆☆
The Smart Home Cam 100 is a very basic camera and the cheapest in this Group Test. To store its footage, you need to subscribe to BT's online service which costs £6.99 per month for 14 days of storage. We think the Y-cam HomeMonitor is a better option for saving video online.

Foscam FI9831P | £88
www.broadbandbuyer.co.uk | ★★★☆☆
This camera suffers the same problems as the other Foscam model in this test. Its video quality is better, but it doesn't have the optical zoom function.

Smanos IP6 | £90
www.getsmanos.co.uk | ★★☆☆☆
The Smanos IP6 is very basic and has no motion detection, night vision or cloud storage. For a camera with so few functions, it's far too expensive.

	Y-cam HomeMonitor HD	D-Link DCS-5222L	Philips In.Sight HD	D-Link DCS-2332L	Foscam FI9826P
WEBSITE	www.homemonitor.me	www.dlink.com	www.philips.co.uk	www.dlink.com	www.foscam.co.uk
PRICE	£150	£125	£130	£170	£114
SUPPLIER	www.homemonitor.me	www.ballicom.co.uk	www.currys.co.uk	www.ebuyer.com	www.broadbandbuyer.co.uk
APPS	Android, iOS, Windows Phone, Roku	Android, iOS	Android, iOS	Android, iOS	Android, iOS
SENSOR	1/4in CMOS	1/4in CMOS	Not disclosed	1/4in CMOS	CMOS (size not disclosed)
VIEWING ANGLE	Horizontal 80°, vertical 45°, diagonal 87°	Horizontal 70°, vertical 53°, diagonal 92°	Horizontal 90°, vertical 50°, diagonal 102°	Horizontal 57.8°, vertical 37.8°, diagonal 66°	Horizontal 300°, vertical 120°, diagonal 70°
VIDEO FORMAT	H.264 MP4	H.264 MP4	H.264 MP4	H.264 MP4	H.264 MP4
VIDEO RESOLUTIONS	1,280 x 720 pixels	1,280 x 720, 800 x 448, 640 x 360, 480 x 272, 320 x 176 pixels	1,280 x 720, 640 x 360, 320 x 180 pixels	1,920 x 720, 1,280 x 800, 800 x 450, 640 x 360, 480 x 270, 320 x 176, 174 x 144 pixels	1,280 x 960 pixels
VIDEO FRAME RATES	15fps	30fps	30fps	30fps	30fps
CLOUD RECORDING	✓	✓ (via FTP server)	✓	✓ (via FTP server)	✓
VIDEO-RECORDING MEDIA	✗	MicroSD (not supplied)	✗	MicroSD (not supplied)	MicroSD (not supplied)
SOUND	44kHz mono	44kHz mono	44kHz mono	44kHz mono	44kHz mono
MAXIMUM STILL IMAGE RESOLUTION	1,200 x 900 pixels	2,048 x 1,536 pixels	2,048 x 1,536 pixels	2,048 x 1,536 pixels	1,280 x 1,024 pixels
NETWORK CONNECTIONS	Ethernet, 802.11n Wi-Fi	Ethernet, 802.11n Wi-Fi	802.11n Wi-Fi	Ethernet, 802.11n Wi-Fi	Ethernet, 802.11n Wi-Fi
AV CONNECTIONS	✗	3.5mm input/output	✗	✗	3.5mm microphone, 3.5mm speaker
NIGHT-VISION MODE	Infrared LEDs	Infrared LEDs	Infrared LEDs	Infrared LEDs	Infrared LEDs
OUTDOOR MODE	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗
POWER TYPE	DC	DC	Mini USB	DC	DC
SIZE	85 x 85 x 30mm	130 x 120 x 103mm	114 x 65 x 65mm	210 x 140 x 94mm	135 x 120 x 105mm
WEIGHT	150g	340g	140g	235g	360g

OUR VERDICT

This isn't the first time the HomeMonitor HD has won a *Web User* Gold Award and it's held its position again in this test mainly because of its unique online-storage service, which keeps your recorded footage for seven days at no extra cost. It's one of the most expensive cameras in this test, but its cloud storage more than makes up for this when you take into account how much other cameras charge for this service.

The DCS-5222L is a more sophisticated security camera that impressed us with its pan-and-tilt function and the quality of its footage. However, there's isn't any kind of cloud-storage option.

The Philips In.Sight HD is another impressive camera that takes great images at any time of day. However, paying for just one year of its top-tier cloud-storage service will cost you more than the camera itself. ■

Web User's Best Buys

Web User and its sister titles test over 2,500 products every year

HARDWARE

NETWORK CAMERAS

Y-cam HomeMonitor HD

NEW!

£150 from **www.homemonitor.me**
Date tested: June 2015

The Y-cam HomeMonitor HD will save you money in the long run if you want to save captured motion-detected footage online. Its unique online-storage option supports a wide range of devices.

KEY SPECS

Apps for Android, iOS, Windows Phone, Roku ▪ 1/4in CMOS sensor ▪ Viewing angle: horizontal 80°, vertical 45°, diagonal 87° ▪ 1,280 x 720 pixels resolution ▪ 15fps frame rate ▪ Ethernet and 802.11n Wi-Fi ▪ 85 x 85 x 30mm ▪ 1150g

BUDGET PC

Chillblast Fusion Cyborg

£600 with monitor, £500 without from **www.chillblast.com**
Date tested: May 2015

The Chillblast Fusion Cyborg is compact, quiet and capable of excellent performance. There isn't much room in the case for future expansion, but it's a great-value PC.

KEY SPECS

Quad-core 3.2GHz Intel Core i5-4460 ▪ 8GB of memory ▪ 1TB hard drive ▪ 21.5in monitor ▪ 1,920 x 1,080 pixels resolution ▪ 3 x USB 3 ports, 5 x USB 2 ports ▪ Windows 7 or 8.1 ▪ 427 x 364 x 189 mm ▪ Three years return-to-base warranty

BUDGET LAPTOP

HP Stream 11

£179.99 from **store.hp.com/ukstore**
Date tested: April 2015

The HP Stream 11 offers excellent performance and a respectable battery life. It's a sleek, attractive laptop, available in blue or magenta, with a good screen that offers wide viewing angles.

KEY SPECS

Dual-core 2.16GHz Intel Celeron N2840 processor ▪ 2GB of memory ▪ 11.6in non-touchscreen ▪ 32GB flash drive ▪ 1,366 x 768 pixels resolution ▪ Single-band 802.11n Wi-Fi ▪ 300 x 206 x 20mm ▪ 1.29kg ▪ One-year return-to-base warranty

MULTIROOM SPEAKER

Sonos Play:1

£167 from **www.currys.co.uk**
Date tested: March 2015

The Sonos Play:1 offers impressive audio quality and comes with excellent software and great apps that provide seamless integration with music services. It's the ideal speaker to use as a starting point for a home entertainment system.

KEY SPECS

Two speakers ▪ 802.11n Wi-Fi, 1 x 10/100 Ethernet ▪ Android and iOS apps ▪ Compatible with UPnP and SMB servers ▪ AAC, FLAC, MP3, OGG and WAV ▪ 161 x 12 x 12mm ▪ 1.8kg

SSD

Samsung 850 Pro 256GB

£136.03 from **www.kikatek.com**
Date tested: February 2015

The Samsung 850 Pro is crammed with new technology that makes it faster and more durable than its competitors. You could buy a similarly sized SSD for much less, but in our tests the cheaper models weren't as fast and they don't come with the 850 Pro's generous 10-year warranty.

KEY SPECS

256GB (also available in 128GB, 512GB & 1TB) ▪ 53p per GB ▪ SATA III interface ▪ 2.5in drive case ▪ 10-year warranty ▪ 100 x 70 x 7mm ▪ 66g

TABLET

Google Nexus 9

£319 from **play.google.com**
Date tested: February 2015

The Nexus 9 is our favourite Android tablet. It has a fantastic screen, even better than the iPad Air 2's, and superb battery life, lasting over 15 hours in our tests. It's cheaper than the latest iPad and comes in 16GB and 32GB capacities.

KEY SPECS

8.9in screen ▪ 2,048 x 1,536 pixels resolution ▪ Dual-core 2.3GHz 64-bit Nvidia Tegra K1 Denver processor ▪ 16/32GB storage ▪ 4G option costs £60 extra (32GB models only) ▪ Android 5.0 ▪ 228 x 154 x 8mm ▪ 425g

All prices correct at time of review

Web User's Best Buys

SOFTWARE & SERVICES

BACKUP AND SYNC

SyncBackFree

Free from **bit.ly/syncback366**
Date tested: March 2015

SyncBackFree is very capable software that gives you plenty of control over how it can be used. If you know what you need from your backups and you're prepared to spend some time configuring the options, SyncBackFree has everything you need.

KEY FEATURES
Synchronise: Copy files in both directions ■ Restore back-up files easily ■ Email logs ■ Schedule backups ■ Simple and Advanced mode ■ Runs on Windows 8, 7, Vista, and XP ■ Extensive Help documentation and support

INTERNET SECURITY

Kaspersky Internet Security 2015

£17.99 from **bit.ly/kaspoffer**
Date tested: January 2015

Kaspersky Internet Security performed near-perfectly throughout our tests last year, with only one unwanted program slipping through. Our sister title *Computeractive* is selling it at the reader-offer price of £17.99 (full price £39.99). Click the link above.

KEY FEATURES
Anti-virus and firewall tools ■ Protects online shopping and banking ■ Identity and privacy tools ■ Dangerous-website alerts ■ Advanced parental control ■ Licences for one, three, and five PCs; for one or two years, or pay monthly ■ Multi-Device version for Mac and Android protection

PHOTO EDITING

Adobe Photoshop Elements 13

£81.08 from **www.adobe.com/uk**
Date tested: December 2014

With its tidy interface and pop-out trays, Adobe Photoshop Elements provides everything an amateur photographer needs and helps you quickly find the right editing tools.

KEY FEATURES
Compatible with Windows XP, Vista, 7, 8+ (32- and 64-bit) ■ Bundled photo organiser ■ Content-aware edits ■ Guided edits ■ People-beautifier tools ■ RAW support

VIDEO EDITING

Adobe Premiere Elements 13

£81.08 from **www.adobe.com/uk**
Date tested: December 2014

Premiere Elements 13's superb interface makes its many features neat but accessible. You won't find better video-editing software for the price.
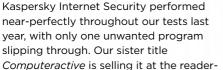
KEY FEATURES
Automatic editing ■ Export to multiple video formats ■ Burn to DVD and Blu-ray ■ Image stabiliser ■ Stop-motion capture ■ Motion tracking ■ Musical scores and sound effects ■ Upload to YouTube and Vimeo

ONLINE STORAGE

Google Drive

From free from **drive.google.com**
Date tested: August 2014

Google Drive is easy to use and has lots of free storage. The Windows software integrates with Explorer, so saving and syncing files is like keeping them in any other PC folder.

KEY FEATURES
15GB free storage ■ Web-based office software ■ Works with Windows XP, Vista, 7 and 8+ ■ Chrome browser add-on ■ Android and iOS apps ■ 100GB extra storage for £1.19 per month; 1TB for £5.97 per month; 10TB for £59.51 per month

ONLINE SITE BUILDER

Weebly

From free from **www.weebly.com**
Date tested: May 2014

Weebly's drag-and-drop interface makes it extremely easy to use. Its templates are a little restrictive, but there are still plenty of options to choose from and the results look great. It also has free Android and iOS apps.

KEY FEATURES
115 templates ■ Unlimited storage ■ SEO tools ■ Meta tags ■ Password protection ■ E-commerce tools ■ Ad-free Starter edition ■ Android and iOS apps ■ RSS ■ Site stats

Best Free Software

RealTimes

uk.real.com

Min requirements: Windows XP/
Vista/7/8+
File size: 1.1MB (installer)

RealPlayer doesn't have the best reputation in the world and although RealPlayer Cloud was a reasonable attempt at reinventing an unloved product for the modern age, past experience will have made lots of people steer clear of the brand. That may not be the only reason that RealNetworks chose to change the name of RealPlayer Cloud to RealTimes, but it was surely a factor.

Putting aside any misgivings you may have, the new product is designed to turn photos and videos into 'stories' – animated montages that are created automatically without any input from yourself, although you can tweak the

results and make whatever changes you require afterwards.

Photos and videos are also backed up to RealCloud, to keep them safe. You can share media, either with friends or publicly, via all the usual methods – email, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and so on. If you share a 'live album' with someone, they will get a notification whenever you add more content to it, so they can take a look at what's new.

RealTimes apps are available for Android, iOS, Mac, Roku and Chromecast, and your files are

automatically formatted for viewing on any device.

You only get 2GB of cloud storage space for free, but you can get another 5GB by turning on the auto-upload feature. You can also purchase additional storage if you need to.

Make sure you click the tiny Options link in the bottom-left corner during installation and reject all the options you don't want, or the program will install junk on your system and make unwanted changes (which hardly helps RealPlayer's reputation!).

⚙ MINI WORKSHOP | View, edit and share stories in RealTimes

1 Once you've installed RealTimes and logged in, it will search your PC for photos and videos and add them. **1** Use the drop-down menu **2** to switch between displaying All Photos & Videos, just Photos or just Videos. You can also switch between showing content stored everywhere, just on your PC or in the cloud. **3**
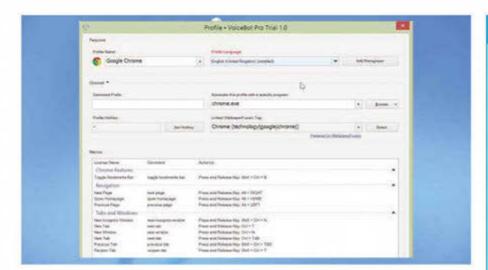
2 RealTimes will generate stories automatically from your content. **1** Select one to view it. When the story has finished playing, you'll be asked what you thought of it and can choose to share it, **2** save it **3** or – if it's not quite right – edit it. **4** If you don't want to make manual tweaks, you can click Remix **5** to get an alternative version.

3 The player window lets you change the title, choose the scenes, add effects (filters and transitions) and alter the background music. **1** You're limited to a 30-second duration in the free version, but if you're going to be sharing the story with someone, that's no bad thing. Only some of the effects are available in the free version.

This fortnight's top new software downloads to help you make the most of your PC, and they're all FREE

SYSTEM TOOL
VoiceBot
www.voicebot.net
Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+ **File size:** 3.3MB

If using the keyboard and mouse is too much like hard work, or you have a disability that makes it difficult, you can use VoiceBot to switch your entire system to voice control. The program recognises spoken words and phrases, and translates them into actions that range from issuing a command to simulating a mouse click. The free edition has some limitations, although you get a 30-day trial of the full version, which only costs $9 (£6) to buy.
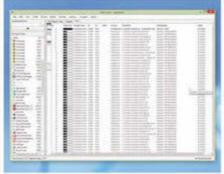

PROXY MANAGER
Burd's Proxy Searcher 5
bit.ly/burd373
Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+ **File size:** 6.2MB

Public proxies can hide your identity and disguise where you're browsing from, but it's not easy to find ones that have fast performance. Burd's Proxy Searcher simplifies the process, and automatically finds all available proxies, provides information about their speed and lets you add any you want to your choice of browser with a single click. The new release fixes a major bug.

SYSTEM-MONITORING TOOL
SpyStudio
www.nektra.com
Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+ **File size:** 24.2MB

SpyStudio is an advanced troubleshooting tool that lets you see exactly what a program is doing. This includes which Registry keys it's accessing, any windows it's opened and the files it's reading and writing. Right-click to select a program and then explore the tabs at the top. SpyStudio used to be a commercial program, but is now freeware.

New Windows 8 Apps

Drop Me
bit.ly/dropme373
Min requirements: Windows 8+/10
File size: 8.24MB
The aim of this colourful puzzle game is to help the cute creatures get into their tubes. It's very easy to begin with but soon gets much harder as new elements are introduced.

Poki for Pocket
bit.ly/poki373
Min requirements: Windows 8+/10
File size: 2.2MB
This unofficial client for Pocket (getpocket.com) lets you save online articles for reading later. You can search through content, update items even when offline, collect achievements and more.

Font Candy
bit.ly/fontcandy373
Min requirements: Windows 8+/10
File size: 7.17MB
This app lets you add customised captions to photos. You can adjust the text style by changing the font, spacing, shadow, alignment and more, and choose a colour or a different photo to fill the text.

ANIMATED GIF MAKER
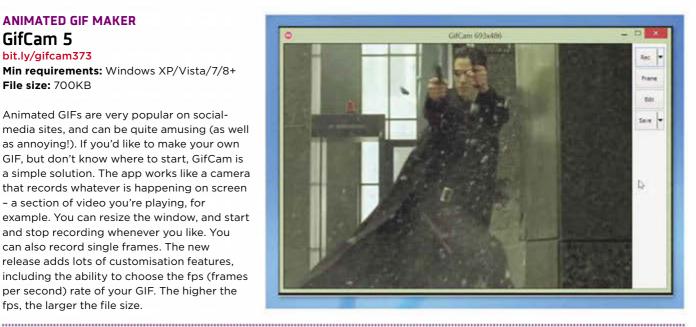
GifCam 5

bit.ly/gifcam373

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+
File size: 700KB

Animated GIFs are very popular on social-media sites, and can be quite amusing (as well as annoying!). If you'd like to make your own GIF, but don't know where to start, GifCam is a simple solution. The app works like a camera that records whatever is happening on screen – a section of video you're playing, for example. You can resize the window, and start and stop recording whenever you like. You can also record single frames. The new release adds lots of customisation features, including the ability to choose the fps (frames per second) rate of your GIF. The higher the fps, the larger the file size.

GAMING TOOL

Game Assistant 3

bit.ly/gameassistant373

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+ **File size:** 6.5MB

Modern 3D games require a lot of system resources and if your PC isn't up to the task, or the system cooling feature in your hardware is inadequate, there's a risk that your computer will overheat. Game Assistant alerts you if your processor, motherboard or graphics card starts running dangerously hot, and offers a one-click boost that can free up memory and close unnecessary processes to improve PC performance.

The latest version of Game Assistant recognises more than 4,000 games and can manage any titles you have installed. It also lets you quickly find and launch the game you want to play.
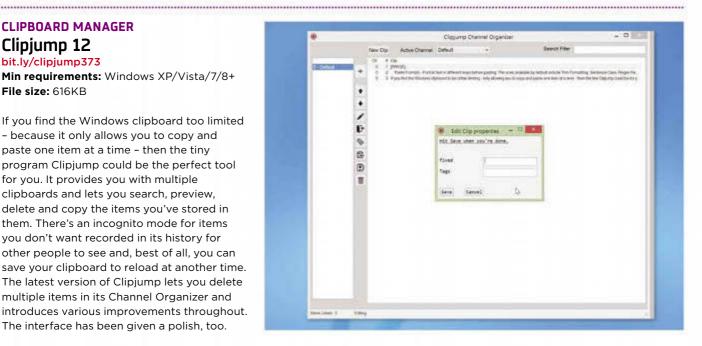
CLIPBOARD MANAGER

Clipjump 12

bit.ly/clipjump373

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+
File size: 616KB

If you find the Windows clipboard too limited – because it only allows you to copy and paste one item at a time – then the tiny program Clipjump could be the perfect tool for you. It provides you with multiple clipboards and lets you search, preview, delete and copy the items you've stored in them. There's an incognito mode for items you don't want recorded in its history for other people to see and, best of all, you can save your clipboard to reload at another time. The latest version of Clipjump lets you delete multiple items in its Channel Organizer and introduces various improvements throughout. The interface has been given a polish, too.

✗ Don't install...

TaskInfo
bit.ly/taskinfo373
Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/8+
File size: 2.9MB

Lots of tools tell you what's going on under the bonnet of your PC, but TaskInfo is one of the messiest, displaying a hodgepodge of information in an ugly, confusing interface. It hasn't been updated since 2012, so we can't vouch for its efficiency or accuracy on newer systems, although at least it's now free for personal use rather than $35 (£23)!
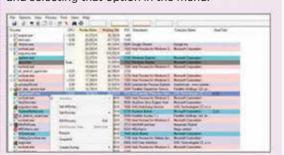
...Install this instead ✓

Process Explorer
bit.ly/process373
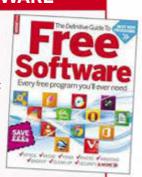**Min requirements:** Windows XP/Vista/8+
File size: 1.1MB

Process Explorer can tell you exactly which programs and processes are running on your PC and provides a much more detailed breakdown than the built-in Windows Task Manager. It can identify and close any misbehaving programs or potential malware, and if you're not sure what a running item is, you can double-click it to find out more, and sort the list of items to make it easier to identify resource-hogging applications. Process Explorer also offers VirusTotal.com integration, which lets you scan suspicious items using the online virus checker by right-clicking and selecting that option in the menu.

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- Clean your PC to make it run as fast as new
- Tweak your browser to unlock hidden features
- Record free music and video from any website

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UPDATED | New tweaks and fixes for your favourite free programs

DISC WRITER
Free AnyBurn 2.8
www.anyburn.com
Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+
File size: 1.1MB

The changes in the newest build of this free disc-authoring tool include the addition of support for Audio-CD Text when you're ripping music CDs. There are also some minor bug fixes and enhancements. You can download 32-bit, 64-bit and portable versions of the program.

MEDIA CONVERTER
Icecream Media Converter 1.46
icecreamapps.com
Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+
File size: 31.3MB

The latest version of this highly polished media-conversion tool has been updated to support a wider range of file formats. You can also now download and convert web content, such as YouTube videos. Finnish language support has been added, too.

SYSTEM TOOL
Windows Repair 3.2
www.tweaking.com
Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+
File size: 12.29MB

Windows Repair helps you fix problems if your PC is misbehaving. The latest version makes sure all computer components are properly working to avoid messing up repairs. Startup is fractionally slower as a result. Some bugs have been fixed and several elements updated and improved.

SYSTEM CLEANER
CCleaner 5.06
www.piriform.com
Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+
File size: 6.2MB

Piriform updates its system-cleaning tool every month. This release adds support for cleaning Edge, Microsoft's new Windows 10 browser, and improves cleaning for Firefox session and Chrome download history. There are also bug fixes and minor interface improvements. ■

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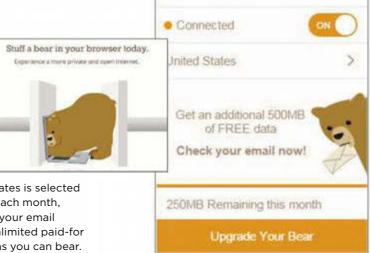
Best New Browser Tools

Access blocked websites using TunnelBear

We've long been fans of the free VPN (virtual private network) TunnelBear, which is one of the easiest and most reliable ways to browse the web anonymously and access sites that are blocked in the UK. So we're delighted that the service is now available as a Chrome extension (bit.ly/tunnel373), which saves you needing to download any software. Instead, you simply click the TunnelBear button on your toolbar – or press Ctrl+Shift+U on your keyboard – to activate the VPN, then choose one of 14 countries to pretend to be browsing from (United States is selected by default). TunnelBear gives you 250MB of free data each month, which it boosts to 750MB when you sign up and verify your email address. If that's not enough, you can upgrade to an unlimited paid-for plan for $4.99 (£3.25) per month to get as much data as you can bear.

Insert animated GIFs into Gmail messages

If a picture paints a thousand words, then an animated GIF can paint even more and save you having to type them all in an email. That's the idea behind Giphy for Gmail (bit.ly/giphy373), which helps you find the perfect moving image to express how you feel, and insert it in a message. Once installed, it adds an icon to the bottom of emails that you can click to search or browse for GIFs using GIF-search engine Giphy (giphy.com).

Click one to embed it in your message for the recipient to enjoy.

Listen to background noise while you work

As next-door neighbours to a building site, we at *Web User* can confirm that drilling, banging and beeping noises are not conducive to a productive day's

work. One solution to these audio annoyances is to install Noisli (bit.ly/noisli373), which helps you focus on the task at hand by playing soothing background noises such as rain, birdsong and lapping waves. You need to sign up to use the add-on, but this is free and allows you to combine different sounds to create the perfect audio environment, and save your mixes as 'combos'. Alternatively, you can choose Random for a surprise selection of sounds or use the timer to play and fade out noise after a specific time. Noisli is a great idea and your ears will thank you for using it.

Add useful tools to your New Tab page

We love extensions that make Chrome's New Tab page more interesting and attractive, and Leoh (bit.ly/leoh373) combines many of the best elements from other add-ons. In front of a stunning background photo that changes every time you open a new tab, it displays the time and weather for your location; quick links to your favourite and most visited sites; news headlines from around the world; and a to-do list and note-taking tool. All of these features and more can be customised or hidden in Leoh's Options & Settings panel, so you get the New Tab page looking and working exactly the way you want. It even syncs across computers, so your settings remain the same no matter where you happen to be using Chrome.

This fortnight's most useful tips and add-ons to help you get the most from Chrome, Firefox, Opera and more

FIREFOX

Turn on Firefox's secret Tracking Protection

Mozilla recently added a feature to Firefox that prevents websites from tracking you around the web. Called Tracking Protection, it differs from Firefox's Do Not Track option – which merely asks companies not to follow you – because it uses data from the privacy tool Disconnect (disconnect .me) to id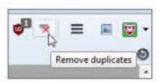entify and block trackers. Oddly, the feature is hidden by default, but it's easy enough to turn it on. Type `about:config` into your address bar, press Enter and search for 'privacy.trackingprotection.enabled'. Double-click it to change its value to 'true' and restart your browser.

Once Tracking Protection is turned on, it will automatically block tracking elements on web pages, which means they'll load up to 40 per cent faster. Click the shield icon in your address bar for data about the current page.

Automatically close duplicate tabs

With its nod to the *Star Wars* films (albeit one of the rubbish prequels), Attack on the Clones (bit.ly/attack373) justifies inclusion in these pages for its name alone, but it also performs a useful task. When you inadvertently open a new tab containing the same web page as a tab you already have open, the add-on lets you instantly close the duplicate tab by clicking its toolbar button, to save memory and avoid confusion. Alternatively, you can select 'Check for duplicates when opening a new tab' in Options to attack the clones automatically.

Avoid dodgy sites using McAfee WebAdvisor

McAfee SiteAdvisor was once an essential security tool for browsers, but over the years it became bloated and intrusive. Now, McAfee has streamlined the add-on's interface and renamed it WebAdvisor. It still uses the same traffic-light system to indicate whether websites and search results are risky to visit, and includes a new feature that alerts you when you use an unsafe password. WebAdvisor certainly feels lighter and less irritating than its predecessor, so it's worth a look if you gave up on SiteAdvisor. Chrome and Internet Explorer users are also being migrated to the new add-on.

Pin tabs using a keyboard shortcut

Pinning tabs in Firefox saves them for your next session and ensures you don't close them accidentally, but to do so you need to right-click the tab and choose 'Pin tab'. Simple Tab Pin (bit.ly/pin373) makes things easier by letting you pin a tab simply by double-clicking it or by pressing Alt+P on your keyboard. Double-click or press Alt+P again to unpin the tab.

OTHER BROWSERS

Browse the web anonymously using Hola

Hola is one of the most popular free proxy tools for disguising your location so you can access blocked content, and it's now available for Opera (bit.ly/ hola373). Unlike other, similar tools, Hola couldn't be easier to use: just click its toolbar button to choose the site you want to access, such as US Netflix or Hulu, and the add-on will switch you to the required country. Click 'Popular sites' for lots more choices or switch to the Player tab to view Hola staff picks. Hola also keeps a record of the sites you've accessed and videos you've watched, so you can revisit them.

Try the new features in Vivaldi

The latest update to Vivaldi (www.vivaldi.com) introduces several features and fixes a few bugs in the previous version. Notable additions include a choice of start-up settings that let you continue from last time, start with the homepage or start with Speed Dial; and the ability to disable single-key shortcuts so you don't trigger them accidentally. Vivaldi has solved an error that caused new tabs to open on the left rather than the right; and a problem that stopped pages refreshing when you pressed F5 while they were still loading.

Best Free Apps

App of the Fortnight

TOOL
NEW

Opera Max Data Manager
bit.ly/operamax373
Min requirements: Android 4.0
Size: 4MB

One of the great things about Opera's mobile browser is that it can compress web pages so they use less data. Now Opera's developers have gone a step further by releasing an app that can also reduce the amount of data consumed by the other apps on your smartphone or tablet.

As well as helping you identify which apps use the most data, Opera Max lets you route your internet traffic through its servers to provide data savings on many of your favourite apps, including Chrome, eBay and Instagram. The data-saving tools are accessed via mobile or Wi-Fi connections (or both) and Opera Max sorts all your apps by daily and monthly usage, showing the amount of data you've saved.

Opera Max doesn't work with all apps, especially those that encrypt your data, but it can significantly reduce data consumption in your browser, which means web pages load faster.

What's more, with one tap you can block specific apps from accessing the internet on mobile or Wi-Fi connections. This feature is particularly handy if you've identified background apps that are eating through your data allowance.
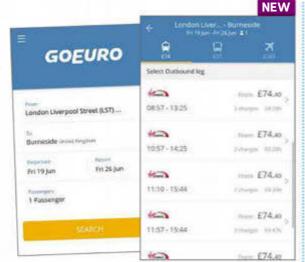
Our rating ★★★★★

TRAVEL
NEW

GoEuro
bit.ly/goeuro373
Min requirements: Android 4.0.3, iOS 7
Size: 9MB

GoEuro lets you search rail, bus and plane journeys to find the quickest and cheapest ways to travel around Europe. Just enter your starting location and destination, along with the dates for when you plan to travel. The app then returns results for all three modes of transport, so you can compare times and prices. Once you've chosen a journey, you can book your tickets directly from the app. We found GoEuro very fast and easy to use but it fell short of being completely thorough; despite covering 3,800 UK locations, some smaller rail stations were not represented by the app, even though adjacent stations on the same line were.

Our rating ★★★☆☆

TOOL
NEW

SURE Universal Remote
bit.ly/sure373
Min requirements: Android 4.2
Size: 28MB

If you own one of the small number of Samsung, HTC or LG phones that it's compatible with, Sure Universal Remote will turn it into a universal remote control. The app works as both a Wi-Fi and infra-red remote, letting you control your smart TV and a range of other digital media devices such as set-top boxes, DVD players, Hi-Fis and streaming devices. In fact, it's even compatible with a range of home-automation systems including iRobot devices and LED lights. We love the idea, but hope more devices will support infra-red technology in the future.

Our rating ★★★☆☆

This fortnight's top free and paid-for apps for Android, iOS and Windows phones and tablets, and smart TVs

PRICE COMPARISON

NEW

uSwitch

bit.ly/uswitch373
Min requirements: iOS 7
Size: 13.2MB

USwitch, one of the UK's most popular price-comparison sites, now lets you access its service directly from your smartphone or tablet. Its developers claim that it takes just five minutes for the app to give you impartial advice on the cheapest energy deals available. If you find a better deal than the one you're currently on, you can switch directly from the app and even use it to track the progress of your switch. What's more, once you've entered your details, the app continues to track changes in energy prices, notifying you about any bigger savings that come along.

Our rating ★★★★☆
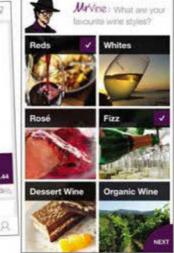
FOOD AND DRINK

NEW

Mr Vine

bit.ly/mrvine373
Min requirements: iOS 7.1
Size: 27.2MB

Aimed at wine aficionados, Mr Vine helps you to discover great wines at affordable prices. After you've signed up, the app uses a series of questions to determine the varieties that you prefer, as well as how much money you'd like to spend. Based on these preferences, it then suggests a range of bottles from different suppliers, which you can find out more about and even order directly from the app. For those who are new to the subject, Mr Vine also includes a handy glossary to help you understand any wine terminology you're unfamiliar with. Whatever your taste – red, white or rosé, dessert wine, fortified wine or fizz – the site can make appropriate recommendations. It also lets you contribute to the wine-loving community by rating and commenting on your best finds.

Our rating ★★★★☆

EVENTS

UPDATED

StubHub

bit.ly/stubhub373
Min requirements: iOS 7, Android 4.0
Size: 80MB

Have you ever bought tickets for an event and then had something crop up that meant you were unable to attend? When this happens, StubHub can help you to sell your tickets, so you're not left out of pocket. Having completely overhauled its app, the ticket marketplace now aims to make sure you never miss out on seeing your favourite acts by scanning the artists in your iTunes library and alerting you when they're playing nearby. StubHub also lets you set price alerts, so that you can grab a bargain when ticket prices drop.

Our rating ★★★★☆

ROUND UP | Quick bites

Microsoft How Old

bit.ly/howold373
Min requirements: Windows Phone 8.1
Size: 2MB

Last month, Microsoft launched a website that analyses photographs of your face in order to guess your age. The addictive How-old.net is now available in app form for Windows Phone users.

Inbox by Gmail

bit.ly/inbox373
Min requirements: Android 4.1, iOS 7
Size: Varies with device

When it first launched, Inbox was only available by invitation. Now, for the first time, the email app that "keeps things organised and helps you get back to what matters", is available to everyone.

Layout from Instagram

bit.ly/layout373
Min requirements: Android 4.1
Size: 1.8MB

When it won App of the Fortnight in issue 369, Layout for Instagram was only available on iOS. Since then, the app has been released on Android too, letting you create collages of up to nine images.

Best Free Apps

NEWS

NewsGIF
bit.ly/newsgif373
Min requirements: iOS 7
Size: 8.9MB

NEW

This quirky new app offers simple, bite-size news updates accompanied by GIFs. The app's editors handpick the stories that appear in your feed, but it's then up to the NewsGIF community (including you) to decide which illustrations best represent the headlines. This means you can vote for the default GIF chosen by the editorial team, one suggested by another user or another that you've found or recorded yourself. The GIF with the most 'upvotes' will appear alongside the headline in the 'Trending' and 'Just In' news feeds. Since the app would be largely redundant if you couldn't also read the original news stories, NewsGIF lets you do this by swiping right on a GIF and tapping Full Story.

Our rating ★★★★☆

SOCIAL

Periscope
bit.ly/peri373
Min requirements: iOS 7.1, Android 4.4
Size: 13.3MB

UPDATED

When we covered Periscope in the live-streaming apps Instant Expert of issue 370 (bit.ly/webuser370), it was only available on iOS. Now it has been released on Android and the iOS version has received a major update, introducing a feature that lets you explore live broadcasts based on their location. By tapping the app's globe icon, you can browse a world map where every live broadcast is marked with a red spot. We didn't find many interesting ones to watch when we tested it (the most popular UK stream depicted a man driving around Westminster, for example), but it's early days and we think Periscope could revolutionise how news is reported and consumed.

Our rating ★★★★☆

5 NEW APPS WORTH PAYING FOR

TOOL

MacID
bit.ly/macid373
Min requirements: iOS 8.0
Size: 1.4MB **Price:** £2.99
MacID lets you unlock your Mac using the Touch ID fingerprint sensor on your iPhone or iPad. It can also be set to wake your Mac when your iOS device comes within close proximity of it.

PRODUCTIVITY

Carbo
bit.ly/carbo373
Min requirements: iOS 8.2
Size: 25.4MB **Price:** £5.99
Carbo lets you capture digital versions of your handwritten notes and sketches so that you can edit and annotate them or store them in the cloud. The app's efficient compression means a typical note is one sixth of the size of a normal photograph.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Pixelmator
bit.ly/pixelmator373
Min requirements: iOS 8.3
Size: 98.7MB **Price:** £3.99
Previously only available on the iPad, this powerful photo-editing app has now been optimised for iPhone, too. New features include a Clone tool, which lets you duplicate areas of your image to remove imperfections, and Distort tools that warp your images.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Teach Yourself Photoshop Elements
bit.ly/photoshop373
Min requirements: iOS 6
Size: 1.16GB **Price:** £7.99
Learning to use photo-editing software can be a testing experience. This 50-part video tutorial aims to make the process a little less overwhelming by taking you through key techniques that you'll need to edit pictures in Adobe's popular Photoshop Elements software.

PRODUCTIVITY

Moleskine Timepage
bit.ly/moleskine373
Min requirements: iOS 8
Size: 60.2MB **Price:** £3.99
Moleskine Timepage works with iCloud, Google Calendar and Microsoft Exchange Server to bring you all your calendars in one place along with weather forecasts, maps and contacts. The app's also been optimised to work with the Apple Watch.

| MacID | Carbo | Pixelmator | Teach Yourself Photoshop Elements | Moleskine Timepage |

Best New TV Apps

TV & FILM
Viewster
www.viewster/mobile
Min requirements: Android 4.0, iOS 7
Size: 9.3MB/15.1MB

Viewster has transcended its origins as a free, legal streaming service for online TV shows and independent films to become a popular place to watch anime (Japanese animations), and it's now updated its mobile apps to add Chromecast support. This means you can stream popular series such as *Naruto Shippuden* and *Hatakari Man* from your phone or tablet to your television. There are also lots of interesting dramas, documentaries and comedies from the US, Australia and Europe, as well as classic *Looney Tunes* and *Popeye* cartoons. The apps give you access to Viewster's whole catalogue for free, without too many ads, and you don't even need to sign up to use the service.

TV
BBC iPlayer for Wii U
bit.ly/wii373
Min requirements: Wii U
Size: 94MB

The iPlayer app has long been available for the PlayStation (3 and 4) and Xbox (360 and One), so it seems only fair that Wii U users can finally watch their favourite BBC shows on their consoles. Once you've installed the free iPlayer app from the Wii U eShop, you can launch it from the main Wii U menu to enjoy live HD streaming of all BBC channels, as well as catching up with previously aired programmes for up to 30 days after they're broadcast. Cleverly, the app makes use of the Wii U's GamePad so that you can continue to view shows on the controller even when the rest of the family want to watch something else on TV. There was previously an iPlayer channel for the original Wii, but this was discontinued in 2013.

MEDIA
AllCast
www.allcast.io
Min requirements: Android 4 (including Kindle Fire), iOS 8
Size: 6.3MB

If you have photos, videos and music on your phone or tablet that you'd like to view or play on a TV, AllCast is a simple, versatile option. It lets you stream media files from your device to a Chromecast, Amazon Fire TV, Xbox, smart TV and more, including items in Dropbox and Google Drive. The Android version now has a smarter interface that lets you view more content from your collection without having to swipe the screen. The redesign also gives AllCast a modern feel. Although it's free, several options – including the ability to cast videos of more than five minutes in length – require you to upgrade to the paid-for version.

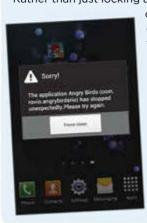## ✗ Don't install...

Privacy Master – Free AppLock
bit.ly/privacy373

This privacy app has an interesting feature that's guaranteed to annoy anyone who fiddles with your phone without asking. Rather than just locking apps (although it also offers that feature), it displays fake crash warnings to deter the intruder for good. Sadly, the app is prone to crash and cause crashes itself, so it ends up being more trouble than it's worth, especially when there are many better alternatives available.

...Install this instead ✓

CM Security Antivirus AppLock
bit.ly/applock373
Min requirements: Varies with device
Size: Varies with device

Prevent prying eyes from nosing through your apps when you leave your phone or tablet unattended by installing this powerful and impressively full-featured free app. As well as letting you lock your apps, games, contacts, photos and settings so that no one can open them without entering a password, it scans everything you have installed on your device and SD card for potential security threats and lets you block unwanted phone calls. You can also catch nosy parkers in the act by taking a photo of them when they enter the wrong password twice, and even find a lost phone by making it yell at you. ■

✚ Recommend free phone apps at www.facebook.com/webusermagazine

Robot helpers

Tired of tedious household chores and repetitive work tasks? Then you need a robot helper. **David Crookes** looks at the latest developments in artificial intelligence
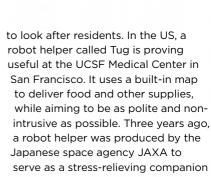
What are they?

Robot helpers are autonomous mechanised servants that are designed to cater both for the whims and fancies of humans and for our pressing need for assistance in more serious matters. They are programmed with some degree of intelligence so they can adapt to their surroundings and the people they come into contact with. The cleverer these robots become, the greater their potential, and experts say we may soon be inviting them into our homes.

Why would we want them?

Humans are always looking for an easier way to complete tasks, which is why manufacturers over the years have come up with all manner of labour-saving devices to aid us in our day-to-day lives. Robot helpers are designed to carry out domestic, social and work-related tasks; not only will they have a built-in love for the boring jobs we hate, they will also be constantly learning. The idea is that they will become better at their chosen tasks than we could ever be. Having a machine to sort the dirty laundry, which is one of the functions of a robot called the PR2 (bit.ly/pr2373), is always going to be an asset.

How helpful are these robots?

Very. And they have the potential to be revolutionary. In Denmark, for instance, robots are used to clean the floors of care homes for the elderly, which has freed up resources to pay for more staff to look after residents. In the US, a robot helper called Tug is proving useful at the UCSF Medical Center in San Francisco. It uses a built-in map to deliver food and other supplies, while aiming to be as polite and non-intrusive as possible. Three years ago, a robot helper was produced by the Japanese space agency JAXA to serve as a stress-relieving companion for Japan's International Space Station resident Koichi Wakata. And at Starwood hotels in the US, a robot butler (pictured) programmed by the concierge desk will bring overnight essentials such as toothpaste and extra toilet roll to your room.

What do robot helpers look like?

That depends on the robot helper's creator. Some are just screens mounted on wheeled pods that can be opened to transport items from one place to another. Others are designed to have basic human attributes, such as a head,

arms, legs and a torso. A robot helper called Budgee (see above) – a trolley that carries around your belongings without needing to be guided – has a round 'face' with bulging 'eyes' that light up. But there is a growing trend to make robot helpers fully resemble humans (usually female) with real-looking skin, hair and piercing eyes. As creepy as that sounds, these lifelike androids are already making in-roads into everyday life.

Where are these creepy humanoids being used?

If you want to see a realistic humanoid helper, then visit Japan and stay at the Henn-na Hotel in the Huis Ten Bosch theme park in Sesebo, Nagasaki. This is

kitted out with 10 androids that are programmed to mimic human behaviour to such an extent that they blink, breathe and even make eye contact. But they are not alone: Toshiba created a female robot called Aiko Chihira that wowed customers at the Nihonbashi branch of the Mitsukoshi department store in Tokyo in April. As it delivered news and directions, its mouth moved and it even obeyed Japanese custom by bowing.

How do they work?

The movement of the robots is down to clever engineering and mechanics, but the thing that makes the robot helpers tick is Artificial Intelligence, or AI. This is true of all robot helpers, not just those that are humanoid and, over the past few years, great strides have been made in this field. Some AI specialist scientists, including Professor Geoff Hinton who works for Google, believe robots could easily develop human-like capacity for logic and reasoning which, he told *The Guardian*, equates to common sense.

Can we talk to robot helpers?

Of course. One of the holy grails of the robot-helper industry is to produce androids that humans can have a natural conversation with. Software engineers are not actually that far from achieving such a thing, as we've seen with the likes of Siri, Google Now and Cortana on our phones. But robot helpers, it is envisaged, will be fully controlled by voice commands and they may even go on to predict what you're going to ask them before an order is spoken.

Who is working on AI?

Google is one of many companies interested in AI, which is why it bought the British AI company DeepMind for $400 million. The science magazine *Nature* showed that Google's development has become so advanced that it could match human competitors when playing the retro games Breakout, Video Pinball and Space Invaders on an Atari 2600. But there have been other feats. Claudico is an artificial intelligence bot that has been shown to outwit elite professional poker players.

Do robots understand and display emotion?

Robot helpers are already detecting nuances of emotion while learning our behaviour. Pepper, a humanoid robot created in Japan in 2014, was billed as the world's first emotion reader. It was able to pick up on vocal intonation and facial expressions via its sensors, microphones and cameras before using proprietary algorithms to calculate

Jill Giardino

human emotion and act accordingly. It is believed that humans will only be truly accepting of robots if they feel a level of engagement that makes them more sensitive to our needs, so experts are beavering away in order to crack this.

When can I replace my spouse with a robot helper?

Cheeky! Although some domestic robot helpers exist already, none are in true human form yet, although last year a robot butler called HomePod raised $260,574 on Kickstarter (bit.ly/ homepod373). There were some intriguing adverts on TV recently for a very realistic-looking robot helper from a company called Persona Synthetics. Billed as being "not just an appliance but a deeply personal lifestyle choice", it turned out to be part of a campaign for a new Channel 4 drama called *Humans*, which will look at the popularity of lifelike robotic helpers, dubbed Synths.

WILL ROBOT HELPERS TAKE OVER THE WORLD?

Science-fiction has frequently explored the idea of robots seizing control and dominating humans, but far-out ideas often become reality. Professor Stephen Hawking is certainly worried and he has gone as far as saying that robot helpers and other machines and systems with AI could "spell the end of the human race" (bit.ly/hawking373).

Microsoft founder Bill Gates agrees, and said in a Q&A session on Reddit that: "I am in the camp that is concerned about super intelligence." Gates says that intelligence could be "strong enough to be a concern" within a few decades, but Microsoft Research chief Eric Horvitz has gone on record to say that he doesn't

believe humans will lose control of certain kinds of intelligence.

SPEED-CLEAN YOUR PC

FOR FREE

Wayne Williams reveals the best free tools and quickest methods to take the hassle and tedium out of maintaining your PC without cutting corners

It's important to give your PC a regular spring clean to keep it running efficiently, and there are plenty of excellent free clean-up tools that you can download to perform the job. Unfortunately, system maintenance is time-consuming and we've all got better things to do than watch progress bars creep across the screen, so it's often a task that gets put off or skipped altogether.

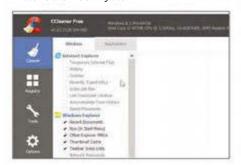In this feature, we show you how to spend less time and effort removing clutter, freeing up space, fixing errors and optimising your system, without compromising the thoroughness of the clean-up. We explain how to speed up your PC-optimising software; offer faster alternatives to built-in Windows tools; suggest new ways to clean your computer that you might not have tried before; and tell you what doesn't need to be cleaned because it won't benefit your system and may even have an adverse effect.

SPEED UP YOUR CLEAN-UP SOFTWARE

How to make your preferred PC-optimisation program faster, without compromising how deeply it cleans

Choose what to clean in CCleaner

CCleaner (www.piriform.com/ccleaner) is undoubtedly the most popular free PC clean-up tool, with millions of users worldwide. Much of its success comes from the fact that it's extremely easy to use; it only takes a couple of clicks to analyse your system for unnecessary files and perform a thorough clean-up. While it requires less thought to accept CCleaner's default settings when running a clean, you can save a lot of time by selecting specific elements to focus on. For example, if you don't use Internet Explorer, which appears first in the list on CCleaner's Windows tab, then don't ask CCleaner to scan it. Any other unused programs that appear on the Applications tab can also be unticked. In our version of CCleaner, several programs including Adobe Acrobat, GIMP and McAfee AntiVirus were pre-selected, even though they're not installed on our system!

The fewer areas that CCleaner has to target, the quicker it will perform the scan and clean, and it will remember your choices for next time. If you decide you need to clean the unticked items in future, just select them again.

Run CCleaner when your PC starts

Instead of launching CCleaner only when you need (or remember) to run it, you can set the program to start when you switch on your computer. That way it will be ready to use immediately – first thing in the morning, for example – to keep your PC running smoothly with the minimum of effort. To activate this, click the Options button in CCleaner's

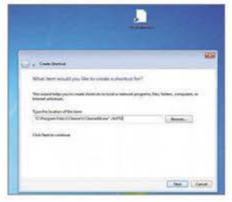left-hand menu, choose Settings and tick the box 'Run CCleaner when the computer starts'.

Configure CCleaner's advanced settings

CCleaner works perfectly without you needing to tweak anything, but it has several advanced settings that can save you time when performing PC maintenance. To find these, go to Options and click Advanced. Here, you can choose only to delete files in the Recycle Bin and Windows Temp folder that have been there for longer than 24 hours; hide warning messages and skip the User Account Control alert (if you trust that CCleaner knows what it's doing); and have the program close when it's finished cleaning, or shut down your PC altogether. This latter option is particularly useful when you run a clean-up at the end of the day, or before you head out somewhere.

Create a shortcut to run CCleaner on demand

Once you've configured CCleaner so that it's set to clean only the areas you require, you can create a shortcut to perform your custom clean-up without needing to launch the program first. To do this, go to Options, Advanced and tick 'Save all settings to INI file'. Right-click a blank area of the Desktop and select New, Shortcut. Browse to CCleaner's install location (probably C:\Program Files\CCleaner), click

CCleaner.exe (or CCleaner64.exe if you have a 64-bit version of Windows) and click OK. Add `/AUTO` to the end of the location (so, for example: "C:\Program Files\CCleaner" /AUTO). Click Next, and give the shortcut a name, such as 'CCleaner fast'. Double-click the shortcut to launch it, and it will clean in the background without opening CCleaner's interface.

Create a hotkey for running CCleaner

Once you've created a CCleaner shortcut using the instructions in the previous tip, you can assign it a hotkey

so you can perform your speedy clean-up without even needing to click anything. To do this, right-click the shortcut's icon and select Properties. Click inside the 'Shortcut key' box and type the key combination you wish to use, for example Ctrl+Shift+C
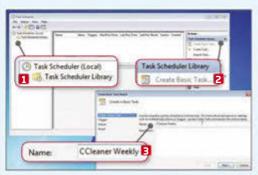
Use Clean Master to delete files on boot

One of CCleaner's closest rivals for efficiency, simplicity and versatility is Clean Master (bit.ly/cleanmaster373), which scans more than 500 programs and boasts on its website that its "worldwide cleaning total exceeds 7 million TB"! This excellent free program has a useful feature that notifies you to scan for junk files when your PC starts up. This helps you get into a time-saving routine and ensures you always start each session with a clean slate. To turn on this option, click the arrow at the top of the program, go to Settings and tick 'Scan junk files after booting your computer'.

If you don't want to be reminded every day, you can set a reminder frequency instead, from every two days

Schedule clean-ups in CCleaner

1 CCleaner doesn't have a built-in scheduler tool, but you can use Windows' Task Scheduler instead. In Windows 7, click Start, and type `task scheduler` into the search box, then launch the program. Click Task Scheduler Library. **1** In the Actions pane, click Create Basic Task. **2** Give the task a name, such as 'CCleaner Weekly'. **3**

2 Click Next and specify when you want the task to start. This can be daily, weekly, monthly, when the computer starts or when you log on. Click Next. Set the start date/time **1** and recurring details. **2** Click Next, make sure 'Start a program' is selected and click Next again.

3 Click the Browse button and navigate to the CCleaner.exe file in Program Files. Select the file **1** and, in the 'Add arguments (optional)' field, enter `/auto`. **2** Click Next. Tick 'Open the Properties dialog for this task when I click Finish'. Click Finish, tick 'Run with highest privileges' and click OK.

to every two weeks. Alternatively, you can set a reminder for when junk exceeds a certain amount, from 100MB to 1GB.
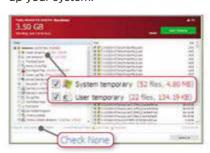
Use Clean Master's Ignore function

If you're forever telling your clean-up program not to wipe certain files, then Clean Master's Ignore feature will come in handy. After the program has completed a scan, select any of the areas or applications you don't want to clean, then click the Ignore button. Clicking the Details link lets you ignore specific items within those areas and applications.

Perform a quick clean in Glary Utilities

Glary Utilities (www.glarysoft.com) is another good free PC-optimisation program that can scan your system for junk and remove it. To speed up a sweep, open the Disk Cleanup option, click Check None and then carefully choose the areas to target. Tick 'System temporary', 'User temporary', Recycle Bin, 'Windows Installer temporary' and select any browsers you use. Everything else can be ignored without affecting the software's efficiency at cleaning and speeding up your system.

Clean specific folders in Glary Utilities

As well as choosing which sections Glary Utilities should target (see the above tip), you can also set the program to clean custom files and folders (CCleaner offers the same feature). This is handy if you use a

particular folder to store temporary items. Just open Disk Cleanup, click 'Custom Files and Folders' and add the items you want to clean.

Run a speedy clean with System Mechanic

The free version of System Mechanic (bit.ly/sysmech373) offers two individual tools for cleaning your computer – 'Clean out PC File Clutter' and 'Find and Remove Junk Files'. The latter removes obsolete and unnecessary files and offers Quick and Deep clean modes. Select this, then click Analyse next to Quick Clear to see how much junk will be removed. Click Next. The cleaning process should take less than a minute to complete and won't miss anything important.

Use System Ninja to quickly find and remove duplicate files
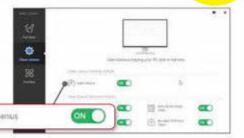
System Ninja (singularlabs.com) is a lightweight cleaning tool that lets you use plug-ins to add extra features to it, including a Registry cleaner, file renamer and duplicate finder. This latter option is particularly useful because it finds identical copies of files that are taking up space on your hard drive. It offers a Specific mode that lets

you save time by only looking for files that match your criteria, rather than every duplicate on your system.

Use Baidu Cleaner's Clean Genius

Baidu Cleaner (cleaner.baidu.com) might not be the best-known PC-optimisation tool, but it has a clever feature called Clean Genius that automatically detects junk as it accrues on your system. This means that when you come to run a full clean, the list of removable items takes just seconds to appear, even on the most cluttered systems. Baidu Cleaner will then tell you if (or when) you need to take action.

DIFFERENT WAYS TO CLEAN

Rather than using your usual clean-up program, speed things up with one of these alternative methods

Clean your PC from the web

Agomo (www.agomo.com) is a free, web-based version of CCleaner that lets you remotely manage and maintain your PC, as well as computers belonging to your friends and family members (with their permission, naturally). This saves you having to install and run the CCleaner software, thereby giving your hard drive a rest, and you can use Agomo's tools from anywhere. The service was recently updated and now provides an online version of Piriform's Defraggler disk defragmentation tool. See our Mini Workshop below to find out how to use Agomo.
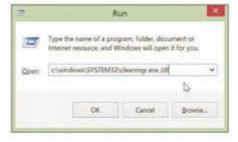
Schedule your PC clean-ups

Instead of having to manually run a clean-up, you can schedule a sweep to be performed automatically. Although you can do this via the Windows Task Scheduler by using the built-in Disk Cleanup feature, it's not as good as a third-party program such as CCleaner. See our Mini Workshop on page 40 (opposite) to find out how to schedule clean-ups in CCleaner.

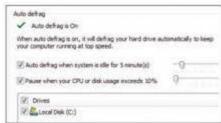### Run a quick clean from the command line

You can start Windows' own Disk Cleanup tool and specify the drive you want to clean by using the command line, which actually saves a lot of time. Click Start and click Run, or just press the Windows key+R. In the Open box, type `c:\windows\SYSTEM32\` `cleanmgr.exe /dX` (replace X with the letter of the drive you want to clean) and press Enter. Select the areas you want to clean and click OK or press Enter again.

Defrag your hard drive during downtime

Glarysoft's free Disk SpeedUp tool (www.glarysoft.com) can defrag your hard drive automatically during idle moments and rearrange the contents to produce the speediest results. To activate this feature, click Options and choose 'Auto defrag'. Select 'Auto defrag when system is idle' and specify how long the program should wait before it starts defragging. You can also pause the process when your memory or drive usage exceeds a certain level.

MINI WORKSHOP | Clean your PC remotely using Agomo

1 Create an Agomo account, sign in, then download and install the program on the PC you want to monitor. You'll now be able to access that computer via the web interface. You can see a summary listing its operating system and hardware **1** along with a list of events, **2** including any restarts or crashes.

2 You can see how your PC is performing by viewing the bandwidth, memory, CPU and process usage. **1** You can also view disk space and activity. **2** For a more detailed breakdown, click the Hardware **3** or Software **4** tabs. You can access the online versions of CCleaner and Defraggler from the top bar, too. **5**
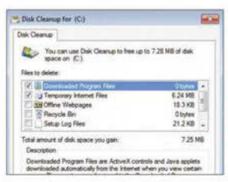
3 The web-based CCleaner looks and works similarly to the downloadable version. Choose which areas to target in the sidebar, **1** then click the Analyse button **2** to find content to clean. Click Run Cleaner **3** to remove it. There's a Registry cleaner **4** and, under Tools, a System Restore manager and Drive Wiper. **5**

Windows offers several built-in clean-up tools, but they can be frustratingly slow. Here's what to use instead
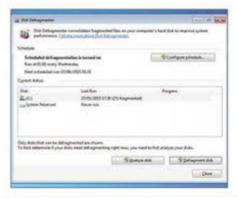
Disk Cleanup

It's hard to compare the speed at which different clean-up tools do their job because each one will target different areas of your hard drive and clean different things. One program may only be faster than another because it's less thorough and ignores certain areas. Clean Master (bit.ly/cleanmaster373) is a very speedy tool that finds and removes an abundance of junk – certainly much more than the Windows built-in Disk Cleanup tool which focuses primarily on Windows files, and is both slow and ineffectual.

Disk Defragmenter

The built-in Windows 7 Disk Defragmenter is notoriously basic and slow. The version in Windows 8 and 8.1 is faster and handles SSDs better (you should never defrag an SSD, but you can "trim" it – a process that maintains optimum write performance and prevents fragmentation), but there are better, and faster tools available. Auslogic Disk Defrag Free (bit.ly/auslogics373), for example, has a very speedy defrag engine and offers a wider selection of options.

MSConfig

The System Configuration tool, which you access by typing `msconfig` into the Run box, lets you manage which programs run when Windows starts. Removing unnecessary items can make the operating system ready to use more quickly. However, WinPatrol (winpatrol.com) is even more efficient because as well as disabling or removing any auto-starting entries, it also lets you delay non-essential items for up to an hour. In Windows 8+, the Task Manager lets you see which programs run alongside the operating system and the impact they have on startup.

PRE-EMPTIVE MAINTENANCE

Cut the time it takes to run a full PC clean-up by performing these quick tweaks every now and then

Uninstall unwanted programs

You can free up a lot of space and memory by removing programs you don't use regularly, and use a third-party uninstaller such as IObit Uninstaller (bit.ly/iobit373) or Revo Uninstaller to remove any leftover junk. Look for portable versions of programs so you can run them directly from a USB flash drive rather than have them cluttering up your hard drive.

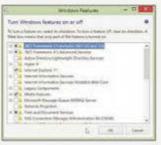### Clear out unused Program Files folders

Take a look inside the Program Files folder (32-bit systems have one; 64-bit PCs have two) and you will probably find folders for programs you installed a long time ago. These may be empty or contain leftover program data such as licence details or temporary files. You can simply and safely delete them.

Remove unwanted Windows components

You can speed up maintenance by removing unwanted and unnecessary elements form Windows, such as Internet Explorer and Windows Media Center. In Windows 7, go to Start, Control Panel, click 'Programs and Features', and then select 'Turn Windows features on or off'. Untick any items you don't want, click OK and restart your PC.

In Windows 8+, open Search and type `Windows features`. Click Settings, then select 'Turn Windows features on or off'.

Stop programs starting alongside Windows

Instead of stopping programs that are automatically running on system boot (by using MSconfig, for example), prevent them from adding themselves to start-up in the first place by using WinPatrol (see above).

WHAT NOT TO CLEAN

Many clean-up tools perform unnecessary and ineffective tasks. To speed things up, you can skip the following

Windows Registry

Many PC-maintenance tools provide an option to clean the Registry, but there's rarely any need to touch it. Even if there are hundreds of incorrect and outdated entries in the Registry (and some tools exaggerate the number of errors they find to look more efficient than their rivals), it is unlikely to slow down your PC or cause problems. Whereas deleting a single important Registry entry by mistake can spell disaster.
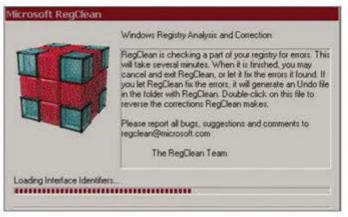
There may be some benefit in cleaning the Registry very occasionally as part of a full maintenance routine on an older PC that hasn't had any care or attention for a long time. But think about it – if it was necessary to clean the Registry regularly, Microsoft would surely have included a Registry cleaner with Windows. In actual fact, the company *did* offer a free, optional tool called RegClean for Windows 95 and 98, but this was discontinued when it was deemed unnecessary in later versions of the OS. You can still download it from bit.ly/regclean373, if for some strange reason you're still using Windows 98, but be aware that "it is very possible that RegClean will not correct a problem that you have encountered".

Defragging your Registry is even more pointless, and any speed boost you get from reordering the database will be negligible.

System memory

Memory cleaners are designed to free up RAM, and therefore speed up your system, but the truth is that Windows does a fine job of managing memory without outside interference. If your system starts to run slowly, closing and reopening your browser or rebooting your PC is likely to produce much better results than downloading, installing and running a pointless tool.

Recycle Bin

You can empty the bin whenever you like, provided you're sure you aren't going to want any of its contents again. However, you don't have to be obsessively vigilant about it because Windows automatically clears out older files when the bin reaches its capacity. If you want to free up space, just reduce the bin's size. Right-click the bin icon, select Properties and set a new size. Older files that no longer fit in the bin will be deleted automatically. If you have multiple hard drives, you'll need to apply the change to each one.

Your browser cache

The purpose of the cache in Chrome, Firefox, IE and other browsers is to store local copies of websites, so when you revisit pages the browser can load them from the hard drive, which is faster than downloading them from scratch, and saves bandwidth. For this reason, clearing the cache will actually slow down your browsing. Browsers automatically purge old data anyway, and the cache will never grow beyond a set size. The only reason to clear the cache is if you want to wipe all traces of sites you've been to, in conjunction with erasing your browsing history. ■

Best free tools to find hard-drive hogs

Videos, pictures, music collections and Windows' system files can take up all the room on your hard drive, but if you identify the space hogs, you can do something to reclaim your resources. **Andy Shaw** tests six free hard-drive analysis tools you can use to pinpoint the files that take up the most space

WinDirStat | windirstat.info | ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★★   **PERFORMANCE** ★★★★★   **EASE OF USE** ★★★★★

WebUser
GOLD AWARD

What we liked:
WinDirStat is a dry, boring-sounding name yet it's one of the most useful free tools you can get for Windows. As soon as it launches, it starts to scan your hard drive, creating a list of all your folders in an expanding tree-like structure. You can click a folder's '+' button to delve into its contents, even while it's scanning.

As the folders are analysed, they shift in order. The largest folders move to the top of the list, so you can easily identify the space hogs. In a frivolous touch you wouldn't expect in a free Windows tool, little Pac-Man icons munch their way through the folders to show you which ones are currently being analysed – it makes us smile every time we see it.

Once the analysis is complete, the bottom half of the screen is switched to a graphical representation of your hard drive. This breaks its contents down into folders and individual files – the larger the block, the bigger the file. The blocks are colour-coded, too, with a key in the top-right panel so you can instantly see whether your biggest space hogs are videos, system files or something else. When you click a block, it shows you

where in the folder tree the file is located. Right-clicking a block opens the file or folder in Explorer, so you can delete it or otherwise deal with it.

How it can be improved:
The colour coding applied to the various file types can change from one scan to another, which is confusing if you are using WinDirStat to scan several different computers. Red, for example, tends to be given to the biggest file on a PC and is then applied to all the other files of that type. We found this was a

video on one PC but a Windows system file on another.

OUR VERDICT
WinDirStat offers the best of both worlds. You can explore your PC's folders and see the biggest space hogs at the top; or cast your eye over the graphical representation where large files visually stand out. It's a really simple and efficient way to clear hogs from your hard drive.

Folder Size | www.mindgems.com | ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★☆ PERFORMANCE ★★★★★ EASE OF USE ★★★★★

WebUser SILVER AWARD

What we liked:
When FolderSize starts scanning, it simply builds up a standard alphabetical list of folders in a panel on the left. Once the scan is complete, the layout is similar to that of WinDirStat, with the larger main window split into two. The bottom half has a graph view, which offers a choice of either a pie chart or a bar graph. This provides a very clear idea of which files and sub-folders hog the most space in any particular folder, while the top half shows a list of folders ordered by size. You can look inside individual folders either by clicking them or by clicking the bar or segment on the graph that represents that folder.

How it can be improved:
While it's handy that Folder Size lets you explore your folders, which helps you make informed decisions about whether to keep or remove individual space-hogging files, you lose the big picture as soon as you do so. We prefer WinDirStat, which keeps the overall view of your hard drive on screen all the time.

OUR VERDICT
Folder Size's graphs do a good job of highlighting space-hogging files and folders, but the program doesn't provide WinDirStat's clear overview of your hard drive that makes the Gold Award-winner such a pleasure to use.

SpaceSniffer | bit.ly/sniff373 | ★★★★☆
FEATURES ★★★★★ PERFORMANCE ★★★★★ EASE OF USE ★★★☆☆

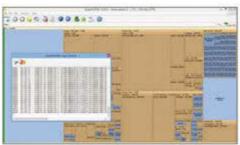**WebUser BRONZE AWARD**

What we liked:
This portable program, like WinDirStat, provides a graphical representation of your hard drive, but its colour-coding is less sophisticated: blue for system files, and brown for anything else. The software builds the map as it scans, so you can see the image of your drive put together as it works, which is interesting to watch but not particularly useful.

You can double-click a folder to zoom into it, then use the Back, Up or Home buttons to get back to where you were. The handy 'More detail' and 'Less detail' buttons provide more information and extra colour-coding, but the tiny print can be overwhelming and difficult to read. Right-clicking an individual file brings up a standard Windows context menu, letting you perform various actions such as deleting a file or opening it with another program.

How it can be improved:
You have to choose how much information you want displayed as you explore your hard drive, because a high level of detail might be right for one view but not necessarily for another, and the software doesn't automatically choose this for you. This means you can end up spending more time switching between detail levels than dealing with your space-hogging files.

OUR VERDICT
SpaceSniffer's graphical system is more dynamic than WinDirStat's, but this isn't necessarily a benefit because the different levels of detail make it easy to lose perspective in the software's shifting landscape.

BEST OF THE REST

WizTree
antibody-software.com
WizTree is a small and simple program. It scans exceptionally quickly – much faster than the award-winning programs. However, the results are limited to a simple list of the top 1,000 space-hogging files, which is fine if that's all you need to know, but it doesn't provide the broader picture of your entire hard drive that you get with WinDirStat.

Scanner
steffengerlach.de/freeware
Scanner's minimalist approach also scans quickly and offers an attractive but somewhat complex circular graph of the content of your hard drive. Clicking sections of the graph lets you drill down into the next layer of your files and folders, but it's easy to get lost in the unfamiliar interface. Fortunately, Back and Up buttons are available to return you to your starting point. However, it doesn't have the at-a-glance clarity of WinDirStat.
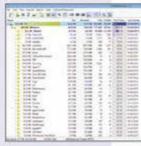
TreeSize
www.jam-software.com
This is another app that simply focuses on one thing, creating a list of the files and folders on your PC in order of how large they are. It does this well, and you can choose to show different levels of information, such as what percentage of space each item takes up and its size in gigabytes. However, it's a bit limited when compared to the other programs we've reviewed here.

Track anything **ONLINE** In real time

Thanks to GPS and the web, it's possible to track virtually anything across the world. **Rob Beattie** rounds up some innovative tracking tools you can use for both practical and fun purposes

Track air traffic across the world

With its beautifully simple interface that superimposes thousands of planes on a world map, the mesmerising Flightradar24 (www.flightradar24.com) is every schoolboy's dream. Double click a plane's icon and the sidebar reveals its route, altitude, speed and landing time; and with Google Earth installed, you get a 3D view from the cockpit that enhances the illusion of flying the plane. Flightradar24 is searchable, too, so you can not only find a specific flight but also see planes being routed from a particular airport.

Planefinder (www.planefinder.net) uses similar graphics and lets you zoom into airports to see planes taxiing. Hover your mouse over an aircraft to display the airline, flight number and destination. Both Flightradar24 and

Planefinder offer mobile versions, which are available as free 'lite' apps or for £2.99.

Find ships anywhere at sea

Shipfinder (shipfinder.co) looks brilliant and provides incredible detail on its world map, but it's as slow as a 500,000-ton tanker, which takes some of the fun out of using the site. It's worth persevering, though, to zoom into dredgers, passenger and cargo ships, pleasure cruisers, tankers and even military vessels. You can search by name, destination and call sign and, once you find a ship, display all manner of information – including whether it's set sail and where it's registered.

Marine Traffic (www.marinetraffic .com) is a nippier alternative and includes some funky features such as a density map – the busiest lanes in the English Channel are bright red – and thorough stats about individual vessels, including port calls, nearby ships, speed and destination. As with Ship Finder, there are a surprising number of photos in the ship database. Both sites have mobile apps and Shipfinder's has an 'augmented reality' feature that claims to be able to use your device's camera to recognise individual ships and pull

their records from its database.

Find safe beaches by tracking sharks

Ocearch (www.ocearch.org) is a 'jaws-dropping' global shark tracker that collects data about hundreds of sharks from all over the world, courtesy of tiny transmitters embedded in their dorsal fins. Every time a shark's fin breaks the surface, it 'pings' a satellite and the position is logged on the site. This lets you track individually named sharks (Philip, perhaps, or Septima) as they

cruise up and down coasts or swim off into the deep ocean. You can filter results by gender, stage of life, location and activity, and double-click a shark to bring up photos, the date they were tagged and a recent-activity button that shows where they've been in the last 24 hours, week or month. There's even a

Track trains across the UK

Train Times (www.traintimes.org.uk/map) describes itself as a 'vaguely live map' and is worth a visit if only for the way it lets you experience the future of high speed rail, courtesy of the 'Move trains at 10x normal speed' setting. You can select any of 31 main railway stations and then watch little animated red dots moving in and out of them. Hover over a dot and you'll get pop-up information about the train, including its destination and arrival time.

Never miss another delivery

Most courier services let you track your packages, but often the info is as vague as "despatched from depot" or "out for delivery". In contrast, DPD's impressive 'Follow My Parcel' service (bit.ly/dpd373) does everything except put you in the van with the driver. Just supply the delivery company with your mobile number and email address, and they'll not only give you a one-hour time slot for the delivery but also provide a link to a map where you can follow the driver en route to your house. You can also see where you are on the driver's list and get an alert when they're 15 minutes away. If you get held up, you can postpone the delivery to another day or ask them to leave the parcel with a nominated neighbour. It certainly beats waiting in all day.

Find a lost pet

Avoid the panic that sets in when your beloved pooch or puss disappears by equipping it with the Tractive GPS Pet Tracker (tractive.com/en). Combine it with a free mobile app for Android or iOS and you can find Fido and track down Tiddles if they decide to go wandering around the neighbourhood. It's a subscription-based service that costs from €4.99 (£3.55) a month.

Locate your friends

If you want to know where friends and family are (but don't necessarily trust them to tell the truth), then try Apple's free Find My Friends app (bit.ly/find373). Your contacts can opt into having their location revealed on your phone, which is useful for organising nights out and tracking people who are prone to wander off, but not so good if you're planning a surprise for someone or are having an extra-marital affair.

For something a bit more sophisticated, try Glympse (www.glympse.com) which offers timed 'glimpses' of someone's location and is able to estimate how long it'll take them to reach you, based on their current progress. It's available for Android, iOS and Windows Phone. ■

free mobile app that you can take to the beach with you – just in case!

It's also worth checking out Tracking Sharks (www.trackingsharks.com) and following the link there to Hawaii Tiger Shark Tracking (oos.soest.hawaii.edu), where you can choose a shark and animate its recent movements.

Spy on the spy satellites

At the time of writing, the amazing satellite tracker N2YO (www.n2yo.com) was tracking 17,142 objects through the sky. You can browse these using the 'Most tracked' or 'Just launched' menus; create your own personalised tracking list; or just orbit the Earth dipping in and out of categories to see only GPS, military or TV broadcast satellites, or just the brightest ones. Once you've selected a satellite, you can see its speed, altitude and position and, if that's not enough, there are various multimedia extras including recordings of meteors as they enter the atmosphere and live HD images from the International Space Station.

Elsewhere, Satview (www.satview.org) does a good job of tracking miscellaneous satellites (dubbed 'space junk') as they re-enter the atmosphere. Watch the skies!

THINGS WE'D LIKE TO TRACK BUT CAN'T

It's probably only a matter of time, but here are seven things we wish we could monitor now. Let us know yours at webuser@dennis.co.uk

- When our takeaway is going to be delivered
- The progress of this year's winter vomiting bug so we don't catch it
- Our money, to see how banks move it around, and why it still takes so long for a cheque to clear
- Skateboarders in their 30s, so we can avoid them
- The binmen, to prevent wheelie-bin thefts and accidents
- The meat and poultry we eat, so we can check that it is what the supermarket packaging says it is
- MPs, because they think it's acceptable to spy on *us*

Opt out of unwanted services

If your inbox is clogged with unasked-for mail and you're worried your data is being shared without your consent, **Jonathan Parkyn** shows you how to find out what you've been opted into and get opted out
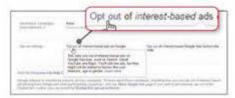
Opt out of Google Ads

Why am I opted in?
Arguably the world's most successful advertising company, Google lets you use lots of services for free. The catch is that you're automatically opted into a bunch of ad-related arrangements that use data about you, your personal interests and browsing history to target you with online ads.

How do I opt out?
You can't opt out of Google's online advertising completely (otherwise the entire internet may possibly implode), but you can opt out of the company's interest-based ads, so you're no longer plagued by adverts for a pair of trainers you nearly bought two years ago, for example. Head to bit.ly/google373 and sign in with your Google account. Look for 'Opt-out settings' and click the links to opt out of both 'interest-based ads on Google' and 'interest-based Google ads across the web'.

Opt out of annoying mailing lists

Why am I opted in?
Is your email inbox flooded with unnecessary newsletters, notices and pestering promotions? It may be your own doing. Perhaps you bought goods online or registered with a website and inadvertently overlooked an easy-to-miss checkbox that said something along the lines of "tick here if you'd rather we didn't spam you incessantly with stuff you don't want from now until the end of time".

How do I opt out?
You could flag it all up as junk within your email program or webmail service,

so future messages are automatically diverted to your spam folder (where they probably belong). If you'd rather they didn't arrive at all, you should find an 'unsubscribe' or similar link at the bottom of the message. And watch out for those tickboxes next time you sign up to anything with your email address.

Opt out of shared endorsements

Why am I opted in?
When you sign up for Google+, by default you let Google personalise targeted ads by allowing the use of your username, profile photo, and comments and +1s you've made as implied endorsements. It means your face and personal data may crop up in ads on your friends' computers when they browse the web, which is just creepy.

How do I opt out?
Sign into your Google account, then head to the Shared Endorsements page at bit.ly/shared373. Scroll down and untick the box next to 'Based upon my activity, Google may show my name and profile photo in shared endorsements that appear in ads', then click Save and Continue.

Opt out of online tracking

Why am I opted in?
Google isn't the only company that opts you into a load of web-tracking options.

Facebook, for example, makes its ads 'better' for its users by tailoring them to things you've shared on your timeline, or to posts and pages that you've liked.

How do I opt out?
If you don't want Facebook and other companies harvesting information about your web activity and using it for advertising purposes, visit the European Interactive Digital Advertising Alliance's UK page (bit.ly/choices373), which will scan your PC for cookies. When it's done, click 'Off' for Facebook, along with any other companies that you don't want tracking you.

Stop Facebook sharing data about you
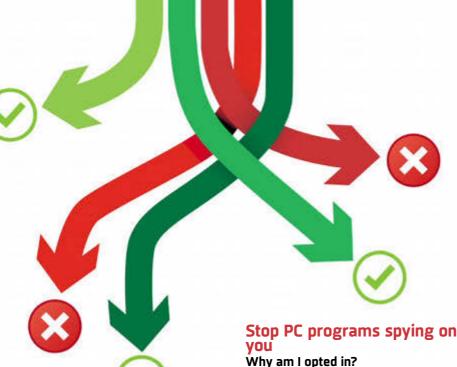
Why am I opted in?
Social networks are all about sharing data with others, but you need to be careful who those 'others' are. Facebook, for example, makes some data about you public. If you're concerned, you may want to opt out of any settings that could impinge on your privacy.

How do I opt out?
Sign in at facebook.com, then click the down arrow and choose Settings. Check

should click File, then Options (in any Office app), then Trust Center followed by Trust Center Settings. Untick the box next to 'Send us information about your use and performance'.
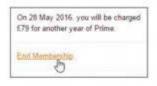
Stop paying for things you didn't buy

Why am I opted in?

From Amazon Prime to Google Music, a lot of free trials make you link a credit or debit card with your account before they let you access the free stuff on offer, but it's all too easy to forget to cancel once the free period is over. In most cases, you need to actively opt out before the trial ends. If you forget, you could end up paying a subscription for something you don't want.

How do I opt out?

When you sign up for a free trial, you can cancel straightaway. Normally, the

provider won't stop access to the service until your free trial ends, making this a sure-fire way to ensure you're not accidently charged. Check wordings before you cancel, though. If the trial in question will end as soon as you cancel, and you'd still like to keep using it for the remainder of the trial, set yourself a reminder (on your phone's calendar, for example) on the day before the subscription is due to renew, so you don't forget to cancel it. ∎

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your options under Privacy and 'Timeline and Tagging'. For example, you can stop your timeline from appearing in search-engine results by going to the Privacy options, clicking Edit next to the entry under 'Who can look me up?' and unticking 'Let other search engines link to your timeline'.

Opt out of ads and more on your phone or tablet

Why am I opted in?

By default, both Android and Apple collect lots of data about their mobile users and use it for their own nefarious purposes (advertising again, mainly, and analysing user behaviour). You may not feel happy about having an intelligence-gathering agent effectively spying on you from within your own pocket.

How do I opt out?

In iOS, tap Settings, then Privacy. Under 'Diagnostics & Usage', tap Don't Send.

Go back to the main Privacy options page, then tap Advertising and switch on Limit Ad Tracking. Go back to Privacy and tap Location Services, then System Services, then switch off Location-Based Ads.

In Android, make sure you have the latest version of the Google Settings app installed (if you don't, install Google Play Services from bit.ly/playservices373). Open the app, tap Ads and switch on 'Opt out of interest-based ads'. Open Chrome, tap 'Usage and crash reports' and choose 'Never send'.

Stop PC programs spying on you

Why am I opted in?

To help improve their software and services, some developers collect information about how you use their programs, by monitoring your activities and reporting back to base. This is particularly true of apps that are tied to the cloud, such as Microsoft Office 365 and Adobe Creative Cloud, and free web apps, such as Photoshop Express (www.photoshop.com/tools).

How do I opt out?

The opt-out process varies from one application to another. For example, for

Adobe products, head to the company's privacy page (bit .ly/adobe373) and choose which data collection and marketing options you'd like to opt out of. Sign in with your Adobe account at bit.ly/adobeapps373 to disable info sharing. Office 365 users

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OTHER THINGS YOU MIGHT WANT TO OPT OUT OF

If you're on the open electoral register, it could mean your details – name, address and so on – are available to anyone who wants that information. Luckily, you can opt out of the open register by contacting your local Electoral Registration Office – enter your postcode at bit .ly/register373 to find yours.

Got your own website or email address? WHOIS publishes the name and address details of anyone who registers a domain, potentially making private information about you available

publicly. Again, it's possible to opt out – see bit.ly/whois373 for more.

Even your TV could be leaking information about you. Some Samsung Smart TVs, for example, have been found to display targeted advertising within apps. If you're seeing these and don't want to, one reported fix is to opt out of Yahoo Privacy Policy by going to the Menu on your Samsung TV, scrolling to Smart Hub, then Terms & Policy, then Yahoo Privacy Policy and ticking the box next to 'I disagree with the Yahoo Privacy Notice'.

✚ What are your 'opt-out' tricks? Tell us at forum.webuser.co.uk

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	Provider	Package name	Monthly price	Contract length	Broadband speed	Allowance	First-year cost*
1	TalkTalk	TalkTalk: Broadband	£5.00 (12 months FREE)	18 months	17Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited	**CHEAPEST** £0.00
2	sky	Sky: Broadband & Calls	£7.50 (12 months FREE)	12 months	17Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited	£0.00
3	plusnet	Plusnet: Broadband & Calls	£9.99 (£2.50 for 12 months)	12 months	17Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited	£30.00
4	EE	EE: Broadband & Calls	£9.95 (£2.95 for 12 months)	12 months	17Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited **	£35.40
5	TalkTalk	TalkTalk Fibre Broadband	£15.00 (£5 for 12 months)	18 months	38Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited	£60.00
6	Virgin media	Virgin: Broadband & Calls	£17.50 (12 months HALF PRICE)	18 months	50Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited **	£105.00
7	plusnet	Plusnet: Fibre Broadband & Calls	£14.99 (£3.99 for 6 months)	18 months	38Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited	£113.88
8	EE	EE: Fibre Broadband & Calls	£19.95 (£9.95 for 6 months)	18 months	38Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited	£179.40
9	sky	Sky: Fibre Broadband & Calls	£20.00 (6 months HALF PRICE)	18 months	38Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited	£180.00
10	Virgin media	Virgin: Broadband & Calls	£30.00 (£20 for 12 months)	18 months	152Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited **	**FASTEST** £240.00

Call 0800 083 2357 or visit www.broadbandgenie.co.uk/webuser

Terms & Conditions apply - see ISP sites for details

*First-year cost does not include line rental. Cost is calculated at monthly price x12 with all introductory offers subtracted. Additional charges incurred outside of free inclusive calls not included in first-year cost.

** Fair-usage or restriction policy applies.

Data supplied by www.broadbandgenie.co.uk. Correct as of 2 June 2015.

Ofcom

Broadband Genie's helpline is powered by Simplify Digital, the Ofcom-accredited switching service

+ Find broadband help at forum.webuser.co.uk

Take a Screen Break

It isn't easy to keep up with the fast pace of technology, but you may remember more than you think. This issue we ask you to look back to **2007**

1 Which major software release in 2007 was codenamed Longhorn?

2 The Apple iPhone was undoubtedly the biggest hardware launch of 2007. What was the resolution of the camera on the first-generation handset?

3 Which band self-released their album *In Rainbows* as a pay-what-you-want download in October 2007?

4 Which country was the first to open an embassy in the online virtual world Second Life?

5 Which company brought all its internet services together under the name Ovi?

6 Which TV-on-demand service made its debut on Christmas Day in 2007?

7 What was the most downloaded album of the year according to figures released by iTunes?

8 What was the name of the budget laptop line (pictured) that was launched by Asus in 2007?

9 What was the name of Toshiba's rival to Blu-ray in the high-definition video format war?

10 What was the name of Google's online encyclopedia, which launched in December 2007 and closed five years later?

11 Who performed the viral video sensation *Chocolate Rain* (pictured), which has been viewed more than 100 million times on YouTube?

12 What was the most searched-for term of 2007, according to Google: Club Penguin, Facebook, Cristiano Ronaldo or YouTube?

CAN YOU IDENTIFY THESE POPULAR WEBSITES FROM 2007?

A

B

C

Get the answers online at www.webuser.co.uk/quiz373

COMPETITIONS

WIN 1 OF 6
Xara Web Designer 11

WORTH £34.99 EACH

The new edition of Xara Web Designer 11 has animation functions that are more powerful and easier to use than ever. Right-click any object to set its animation properties, and enjoy more templates, a new photo-slider widget, and syncing with Dropbox and Google Drive. To enter, email your address to webusercomp@dennis.co.uk with 'xara' in the subject line. For more information on Xara products, visit www.xara.com and follow Xara on Twitter @XaraGroup.

WIN 1 OF 4
Kitvision Splash waterproof camera

WORTH £69.99 EACH

Kitvision's waterproof Splash camera is easy to use, with simple one-touch recording and an LCD display for composing shots and viewing playback. It records video in full HD 1080p and takes 12-megapixel video photos, so every moment is captured in great quality. To enter, email your address to webusercomp@dennis.co.uk with 'splash' in the subject line. For more info on Kitvision products, visit kitvision.co.uk and follow Kitvision on Twitter @KitvisionUK.

Make time-lapse videos using Hyperlapse | bit.ly/hyperlapse373

Hyperlapse is a new tool from Microsoft that turns first-person videos into smooth, stable time-lapses you can share. Here's how to use it

It can be fun recording first-person videos – capturing that hike, mountain-bike ride or terrifying rollercoaster experience – but watching the video afterwards might not be as entertaining as you'd hoped. There's a good chance it's too long and, if the camera is bobbing about, it might be difficult to see what's going on.

Hyperlapse solves these problems by speeding up your videos and making them super-smooth. There are two versions available: Hyperlapse Pro for 64-bit PCs (Windows 7 and up), and Hyperlapse Mobile for Android and Windows Phone. You need to join the Microsoft Hyperlapse Mobile for Android community before you can download the mobile version.

In this Workshop, we'll concentrate on the PC version.

QUICK MENU
From here, you can create a new project, open an existing one or save a hyperlapse

VIDEO STATS
This box shows you the original video length, trimmed length and estimated output length

1 The opening screen gives you two options. You can create a new project **1** or open an existing one. **2** Select the former option and browse for a first-person video to use. Hyperlapse recognises MP4, MOV and WMV video file formats. It can open other formats, but they sometimes cause it to crash.

2 A preview of your video will appear in the centre of the screen. **1** Use the controls below to watch it and mark the start and end of the clip, **2** trimming out any uninteresting parts. The start, current **3** and end frame positions **4** are shown, allowing for very precise marking.
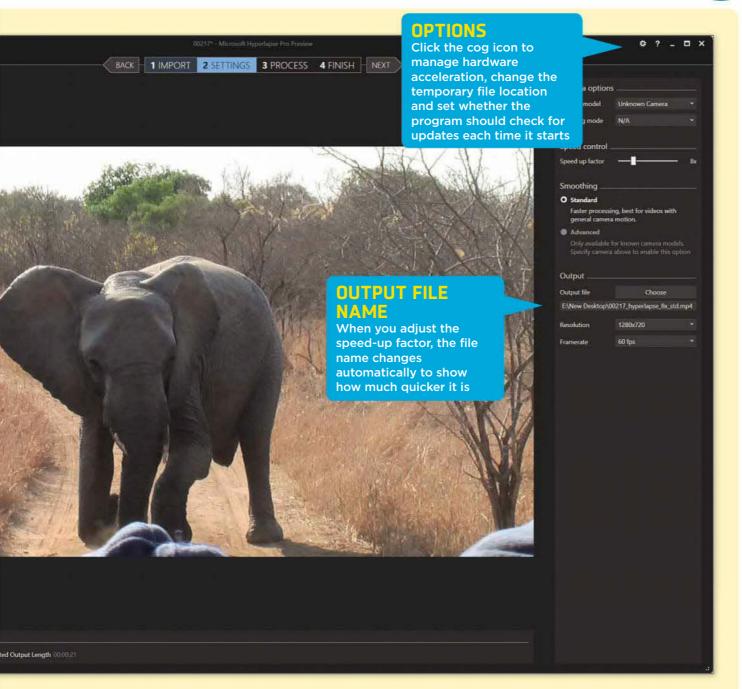
3 If the video orientation isn't correct (on its side, for example) you can use the buttons on the left or right of the screen to rotate it. **1** Hyperlapse uses hardware acceleration, so it will perform the action very quickly. Click Next **2** to move to the Settings screen.

4 Hyperlapse supports various camera models from GoPro and Sony. If your video was shot using one of these cameras, select your model from the drop-down list. **1** You'll also be able to choose a 'Shooting mode' **2** and Advanced smoothing. **3** This is only available for known camera models.

5 If you didn't film the video on of the listed models, then select Unknown Camera. **1** You can't change the shooting mode **2** and are limited to Standard smoothing, but you can still use Hyperlapse. The slider lets you adjust the 'Speed up factor' **3** (the speed at which the video will play).

OPTIONS
Click the cog icon to manage hardware acceleration, change the temporary file location and set whether the program should check for updates each time it starts

OUTPUT FILE NAME
When you adjust the speed-up factor, the file name changes automatically to show how much quicker it is

6 You can change the name of the output file **1** and also adjust the video's resolution and frame rate. **2** There are only a small number of pre-sets available to choose from. It's worth leaving the default settings as they are unless you really need to make changes to the file size and quality.

7 Click Next and Hyperlapse will begin processing your video and producing the time-lapse. This may take a while depending on the length of your clip. You can see the progress below. **1** The process can be cancelled at any time **2** or you can click the Back button **3** to return to Settings.

8 When it's finished, click the Play button **1** to watch the time-lapse. You can watch the saved version in any media player. If you want to change the speed of the video, click the 'Back to settings' button **2** and go through the process again (it will be quicker this time). Click Home **3** and save the project.

+ Get more tips in our newsletter at www.webuser.co.uk/newsletter

Store 10 times as many photos on your phone

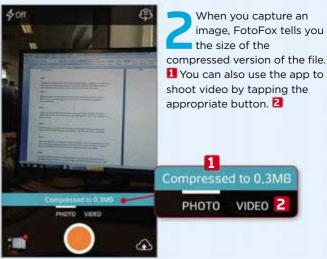**FotoFox: fotofox.io** | 🕐 **10 mins** | 🤖 **Android 2.3.3,** 🍎 **iOS 7**

Smartphone cameras let you capture, edit and share stunning photos on the go, but taking lots of large, high-quality images can quickly eat up the storage space on your device. FotoFox tackles this problem by uploading all your snaps to the app's server and only storing compressed versions on your device, which take up a fraction of the space. The high-resolution original file can be restored at the touch of a button, but for most purposes the optimised files are more than sufficient.

In this Workshop, we show you how to use the Android version of FotoFox (which can be used in place of your default camera app) and get to grips with its basic functions. You can also keep tabs on the amount of storage space the app is saving you. And in case you want to use a cloud service that lets you access your photos from the web, we also look at the new Flickr app, which automatically uploads up to 1TB of photos from any device.

1 Download and run FotoFox. Use the app to take a photo, tapping the screen on the spot where you want to focus. The flash can be switched to Auto or On by tapping the flash button **1** and you can choose between the front and rear cameras. **2**

2 When you capture an image, FotoFox tells you the size of the compressed version of the file. **1** You can also use the app to shoot video by tapping the appropriate button. **2**

3 Tap the cloud icon **1** to track the upload progress of your photographs. By default, the app only uploads files over Wi-Fi and you'll see the message 'Waiting for Wi-Fi' **2** if you're not connected to a wireless network.

4 If you want to be able to upload images using your mobile network, tap the Settings cog **1** and flick the switch to off. An animation appears and the progress bars fill as your photos are uploaded. **2**
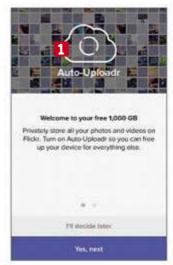
5 Tap the thumbnail marked with a red spot **1** to see the size of your compressed images **2** along with the amount of the space you've saved by uploading the original to FotoFox's servers. **3** To download the full-size version of an image, tap the button next to it. **4**
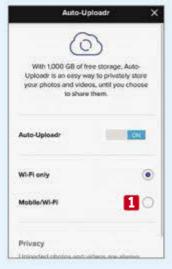
6 You can use FotoFox to compress any photos and videos you already have in your gallery by tapping the plus icon, selecting the appropriate files and tapping 'Import and Compress'. **1** When you return to the Managed page, the app shows the total amount of space saved by compressing your images.
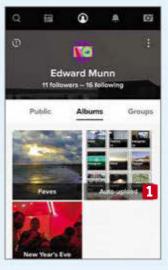
7 You can access your FotoFox images at any time by opening FotoFox and visiting the Managed menu. Alternatively, navigate to the Gallery app on your device and select the FotoFox album, **1** where you can edit or share your pictures. Even if you delete the app, your images will remain here.

8 If you want to access your original photos via the web or from other devices, try using the new Flickr mobile app (bit.ly/flickr373). Its Auto-Uploadr **1** backs up all your photos (past and future), which remain private until you choose to share them.

9 By default, Flickr only uploads images via Wi-Fi. If you want to also use your mobile connection to upload files, tap the menu button, select Auto-Uploadr and choose Mobile/Wi-Fi. **1** Unlike FotoFox, you'll need to delete your local files manually once they've been uploaded to the cloud.

10 After your images have been uploaded, they're saved to the app's Auto-upload album. **1** Tap an image and select the share icon to copy its URL or share it via email. To make an image Public, tap its info button, then tap Private to choose a new privacy level.

Find the fastest free Wi-Fi near you

Cafes, pubs and restaurants are great for getting free Wi-Fi on your laptop, tablet or phone, but connections can be a bit slow. Sometimes, moving to another coffee shop could be all you need to do to get a better connection. SpeedSpot Internet Speed Test can help you find out which hotspots are offering the fastest Wi-Fi in your area and lets you add new ones if you find them.

SpeedSpot Internet Speed Test: bit.ly/speedspot373 | 🕐 **10 mins** | 🤖 **Android**

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1 Tap the Wi-Fi Finder. **1** The app only loads 500 hotspots at a time so start zooming in to the area you want to focus on, then press the Reload Spots button. **2** The bigger the city, the more hotspots you'll find.

2 The size of a marker indicates a hotspot's download speed; the bigger the marker, the faster the speed. The colour indicates the upload speed, where red **1** is slow and green **2** is fast. A spot with white borders signifies free Wi-Fi, while a grey border **3** means you have to pay.

3 Tap the '+' icon to filter the spots on the map depending on the type of premises you're looking for, such as a hotel, coffee shop, restaurant or pub. **1** Tap the arrow to move to your current location **2**

4 Click a spot to view details about it. The information includes the ping (the connection's response time), **1** download **2** and upload **3** speeds, and provides more information on the SSID (the network's name) and whether it's secure. **4** Check the notes for hints on how to get the Wi-Fi password. **5**

5 If you're in a hotspot that isn't listed, you can add it to the service's data. Tap the Speedtest tab, **1** then the Speedtest button. The app will test your connection. **2** Let it know if the hotspot is free or paid for, **3** and whether it needs a password. **4**

6 Click the 'Pick a Venue' button **1** to select the type of place you're in. **2** You can type a name from the 'Name the Spot' button, **3** then click Add SpeedSpot **4** to upload it to the service. Click the History tab **5** to see previous speed tests you've performed.

Send messages privately from any device

Developed by BitTorrent, Bleep is a free, cross-platform messaging client that protects your privacy. Unlike many of its competitors, Bleep encrypts all your messages and sends them peer-to-peer, not via a server. It doesn't require your phone number or email address, so you'll only ever be contacted by people you choose to add. In this Workshop, we show you how to set up Bleep on an Android device.
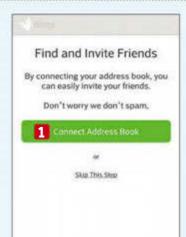
Bleep: www.bleep.pm | ⏱ **10 mins** | 🤖 **Android 4.0,** 🍎 **iOS 8,** 🪟 **Windows,** 🍎 **Mac**
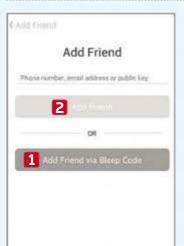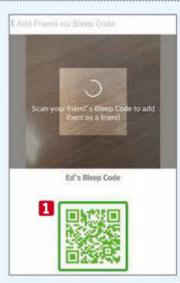
1 Install and run Bleep and, when the app launches, choose a nickname **1** before tapping Join. **2** Your nickname is how you will appear in Bleep conversations, but it is never used to identify your account.

2 You can connect your address book to Bleep if you want to find out which friends use the app, **1** but this only works if they have added their phone numbers or email addresses. Friends who don't use Bleep can be invited via text or email.

3 By withholding your phone number or email address, you'll be using the app's incognito mode. To add friends who also use incognito mode, tap the plus icon and select 'Add Friend via Bleep Code'. **1** Alternatively, enter their public key and select Add Friend. **2**

4 Adding a friend via Bleep Code requires you to scan their unique QR code **1** using the app, so you'll need to be with them to do this. We couldn't find our public key using the Android version of the app, but you can add iOS and Desktop users using this method.

5 After a friend accepts your invitation, they'll appear as 'online' in your contacts list. Tap their name to start a text conversation. From this page, you can tap the phone icon **1** to call them or tap 'Go to Whisper' **2** to send self-destructing messages.

6 Whispers disappear automatically within 25 seconds and you can use the feature to send images **1** as well as text. The other person's name is concealed until you tap the eye icon, **2** at which point the contents of your conversation become blurred. **3** Tap 'Go to Messages' **4** to exit Whisper.
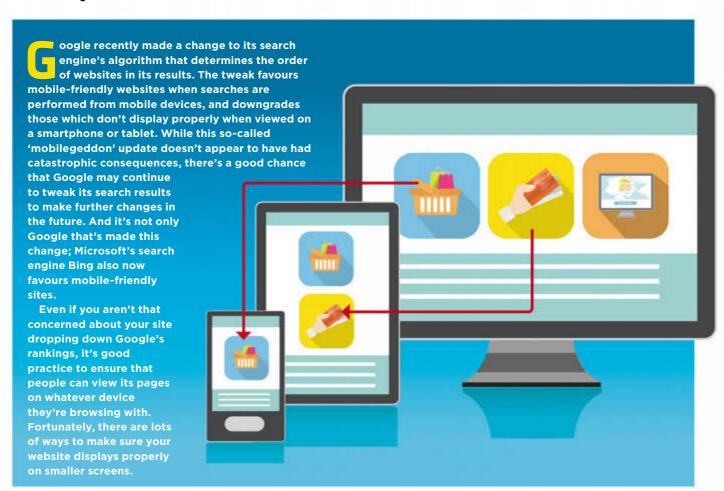
How to...

Make your website mobile friendly

Google's recent tweaks mean your website needs to be mobile-friendly to attract the maximum number of visitors. **Wayne Williams** shows you what to do

Google recently made a change to its search engine's algorithm that determines the order of websites in its results. The tweak favours mobile-friendly websites when searches are performed from mobile devices, and downgrades those which don't display properly when viewed on a smartphone or tablet. While this so-called 'mobilegeddon' update doesn't appear to have had catastrophic consequences, there's a good chance that Google may continue to tweak its search results to make further changes in the future. And it's not only Google that's made this change; Microsoft's search engine Bing also now favours mobile-friendly sites.

Even if you aren't that concerned about your site dropping down Google's rankings, it's good practice to ensure that people can view its pages on whatever device they're browsing with. Fortunately, there are lots of ways to make sure your website displays properly on smaller screens.
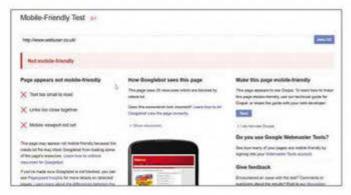
Is my site mobile friendly?

Just because you've made no conscious effort to cater for mobile devices in the design of your site doesn't mean it won't display correctly on a smartphone. Some services will automatically serve up a mobile-version of your site when it's viewed on a handset, meaning you don't have to do anything, and you won't be penalised by Google and Bing's new rules.

The easiest way to find out if your website is mobile-friendly is to take Google's test at bit.ly/mobiletest373. Just enter the address of your site and click the Analyze button. Google will run a series of checks and present the results, along with an image showing how Googlebot (the software robot that Google uses to seek out and check pages to include in its search engine) sees your page. If you get a green 'Awesome' message, you don't have to do anything, but if you see a red 'Not mobile-friendly' warning, you'll need to take action. The test will list the problems that were found, such as text being too small to read, links too close together, buttons that are too small to tap, and so on. Google provides useful links to help you resolve these problems.

Use Google's site-scanning tool to check whether it thinks your website is mobile-friendly

Make changes based on your website software

If your site is built using CMS (Content Management System) software, such as WordPress, Joomla, Drupal, Blogger or Tumblr, then you're in luck because making your site mobile-friendly is likely to be very simple. Before making any changes, take the time to back up your site in case you encounter any problems. Your CMS provider's website should explain the process.

Once that's completed, make sure your CMS is updated to the latest version. This step alone might be all that's needed to make your website mobile-friendly, so it's definitely worth doing. We'll show you how to make the updates in our Mini Workshop below.

If you've updated to the latest version of your CMS and your site still isn't mobile-friendly, there may be a problem with a custom theme. Check to see if the theme you're using is supposed to be mobile-friendly, then try switching to one that definitely is and retake Google's test. If it passes, you'll know the problem is with your custom design and you'll need to either make changes or switch to a different theme. This isn't always as straightforward as it should be because complicated and customised sites can break when you change themes.
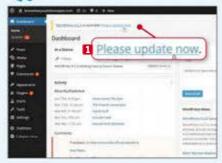
If you need help making the necessary changes, browse your CMS provider's site for advice. Typepad (bit.ly/typepad373), Squarespace (bit.ly/squarespace373) and Wix (bit.ly/wix373) all have helpful guides. Google also has its dedicated guides for other services:
- WordPress (bit.ly/wordpress373)
- Joomla (bit.ly/joomla373)
- Drupal (bit.ly/drupal373)
- Blogger (bit.ly/blogger373)
- vBulletin (bit.ly/vbulletin373)
- Tumblr (bit.ly/tumblr373)
- DataLife Engine (bit.ly/datalife373)
- Magento (bit.ly/magento373)
- PrestaShop (bit.ly/presta373)
- Bitrix (bit.ly/bitrix373)
- Google Sites (bit.ly/gsites373)

Code it yourself

If your site has been coded by hand, you have two choices: the first and best option is to create a new responsive website that changes its layout
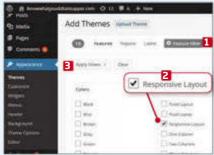

Wix's tools can be used to design a site that will adapt perfectly to any screen size

If your CMS theme isn't mobile-friendly, switch to one that is. Many of them are free

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MINI WORKSHOP | Make sure a WordPress site displays properly on mobile devices

1 It's possible that your WordPress site might have a theme that works fine on mobile devices, but is just in need of updating. First, make sure you're running the latest version of WordPress itself. A banner at the top will tell you if an update is available. Click the link to update your installation **1** but make sure you back up your site before doing so.

2 In the sidebar, click Appearance **1** and select Themes. **2** Look for your current template, which will be marked as Active. **3** If there's an update available, it will be shown at the top of the thumbnail. **4** Updating the theme might make your site mobile-friendly, so once you have the latest version, run Google's test again.

3 You can also pick a different theme. Click the Add New Theme thumbnail at the bottom of the page. Click the Feature Filter button **1** and select Responsive Layout. **2** Click Apply Filters **3** and browse the selection. Choose a theme and install it, then click Live Preview. You can test this design on a mobile device. Finally, click Save & Activate.

WebUser Bookstore

Many webhosts have services that can help you create a website that's compatible with mobile devices

dynamically, automatically reordering content to suit the screen it's being viewed on. This is Google's preferred choice, so it should be the best option for optimising your site in searches. However, it probably means a complete overhaul of your website.

The second option is to build two separate but cross-linked sites – one for viewing on computers and another for mobile devices. With the latter method, you can opt for dynamic serving (a different version of the site is served up automatically, based on the device you're browsing on), or separate URLs (your browser is redirected to the relevant site at a slightly different address).

The benefit of a specially designed mobile site is you can tailor the content that's displayed to suit your audience – because mobile visitors may have different priorities to those sitting at a bigger screen. You can always mix responsive design and dynamic serving if

you need to.

A common problem with websites not displaying properly on mobile devices is the lack of a set viewpoint. This controls how a site displays on a mobile screen and prevents the page from simply being rendered as a massively scaled down (and therefore illegible) version of the site. Setting a viewpoint lets you control the scaling and page width.

You'll also want to make sure the design takes into account that people will be tapping buttons and links with fingers, not clicking with a more precise mouse pointer. Also, bear in mind that anyone viewing your site on a mobile device may be doing so from a cellular connection, so use compression wherever possible, and ensure all the images are a sensible size.

Finally, you should avoid plug-ins on your site (Flash, Silverlight and Java). Most mobile browsers don't support them, so any content that uses them won't be viewable.

Google has some useful advice to get you started at bit.ly/mobileseo373.

Use a web builder

The days of having to hand-code a site to get the design you want are long gone. Thankfully, you can now use an online or downloadable tool – such as those provided by your hosting company – to build your web presence. These come with templates designed for websites on mobile devices.

Some good examples include Fasthosts Website Builder (bit.ly/fasthosts373), 1&1 Mobile Website Builder (bit.ly/myweb373), Incomedia's WebSite X5 (www.websitex5.com), Heart Internet's goMobi Mobile Website Builder (bit.ly/gomobi373) and WebEden's Website Builder (www.webeden.co.uk). 1&1 also has a service that will convert an existing site into a mobile-friendly version – see our Mini Workshop below to find out how to use it. ■

MINI WORKSHOP | Use 1&1 Mobile Website Builder to make your site mobile-friendly

1 To use the service, you'll need to sign up for a package. Prices start at around £3 a month for a mobile builder with 10GB of web space. You can try the service by entering the URL of an existing website **1** and clicking Start. **2** A preview of the site as optimised for mobile devices will open in a separate pop-up window.

2 It takes a while to show the mobile site so be patient. When it loads, you'll see the site as it would appear on an Apple iPhone (the information at the top says iPhone 5, but hover your mouse over the site and the details say iPhone 6). You can interact with the site as you would on a real phone. Click any buttons **1** and use the scrollbar **2** to explore.

3 Click the Desktop button **1** to see what the standard version of the site **2** looks like when viewed on a smartphone. If it's not currently mobile-friendly, it will be difficult to navigate. Click the Rotate button **3** to view the website (mobile or full-size) in landscape mode.

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STEP 4 Enter your Apple ID password to confirm

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Web User's Top Tips

Our experts show how to stream music, videos and photos from your PC to other devices in the home

TOP TIPS FOR STREAMING MEDIA FROM PC TO ANY DEVICE
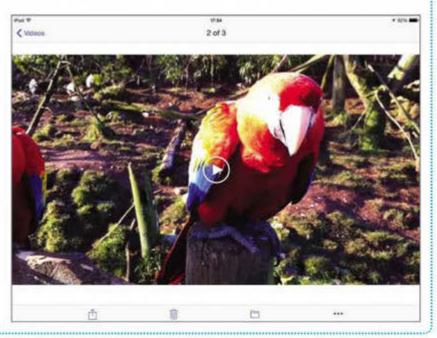
Stream media files from OneDrive

Microsoft's OneDrive's streaming capabilities and 15GB or more of free storage space makes it well worth exploring as a media centre. OneDrive is built into Windows 8.1 and can be downloaded from bit.ly/one373 for older versions of Windows from Vista onwards. Open the OneDrive folder on your PC's hard drive in an Explorer window and create Music, Videos and Photos folders, if they don't already exist. Select the media files you want to share with other computers, mobile phones and tablets in Explorer and copy them to these folders.

While waiting for OneDrive to sync (which could take a few hours with large files), get the OneDrive app for your phone or tablet. Open the app, go to the Music or Videos folder and tap a file to play it.

This video in the PC's OneDrive folder is being played on the iPad using the OneDrive app

Stream media from Google Drive

Google Drive has similar capabilities to OneDrive, and you can use it to stream movies and music, and view photos. Download and install Google Drive on your computer (bit.ly/goog373) and sign in. It creates a folder on the PC's hard drive which you can open in Explorer to create Music, Videos and Photos folders.

Google provides 15GB of online storage and you can copy your favourite music and videos to the Google Drive folder on your PC. The app automatically uploads the files to the

Save a video file to Google Drive on your PC and you can view it on any device that has the app installed

online storage so you can play them using the Google Drive app on an iPhone, iPad, Android phone or tablet.

You can install Google Drive and OneDrive on the same computer and have a 15GB music library in one account and 15GB of videos in the other. That's 30GB of media you can stream to other devices such as phones, tablets, TVs and computers.

Media on your TV

Google Chromecast and Apple TV are two of the best devices for streaming media to your big-screen TV, and which one you choose depends on whether you have an iPhone or iPad, or an Android phone or tablet. Apple TV is the simpler of the two because anything that appears on the iPhone or iPad can be mirrored on the TV. Just pull up the panel at the bottom of the screen and select Apple TV. This means you could stream videos, music or photos from OneDrive or Google Drive using the apps and send the output to your Apple TV.

Install the free Videostream Google Chromecast extension (bit.ly/video373) to select movies stored on your computer's hard drive and send them to your TV via the Chromecast dongle. This is one of the easiest ways

If you see words that `look like they've been typed in a typewriter`, follow the instructions and type them exactly as they appear, paying close attention to spaces and punctuation.

to get your PC content on the big screen. It is best used with a laptop because you can sit on the sofa with it on your lap and select, play and pause movies.
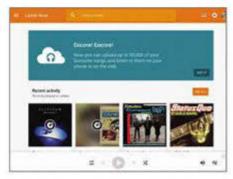
Stream music everywhere

One of the easiest ways to stream music to any computer, phone or tablet and play it wherever you are is to use Google Play Music.

First, you need to create a digital music library on your PC's hard drive. The tracks must not be protected. iTunes can copy music CDs to your drive and Google accepts the Apple file format for ripped tracks. CDex (bit.ly/cdex373) can also be used and you can create FLAC or MP3 files. Run CDex or iTunes and insert a music CD in your PC's drive. It automatically finds the album and track information from the internet. Choose an audio file format to convert the tracks to. Google supports many formats, but all are converted to 320kbps MP3s, so you might as well select that format anyway.

After copying all your CDs, go to play.google.com, click Music on the left and then My Music. You need a Google account, but it's free to create one. Google allows you to upload 50,000 songs and store them online, which is around 5,000 albums. Click the menu button in the top-left corner, then click Add Music in the left-hand pane. You can then drag individual music tracks or entire albums or folders from an Explorer window and drop them on the browser window to upload them.

Uploading your whole music library manually in this way is painfully slow, so get Google Play Music Manager (bit.ly/musicman373) and it will upload your music library in the background whenever your PC is switched on. Check it about a week later and all the albums on your PC will be mirrored online. These can be played on your computer using a browser (Chrome is best), and on the iPhone, iPad and Android phones and tablets using the Google Play Music app.

Copy your music library to Google Music and play it on any device

TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL
More advanced tips for when you're feeling brave

AirStream your movies

There are several programs that let you share the music, videos and photos on your computer with other devices around your home. Kodi (kodi.tv) is one, but AirStream (airstream.io) is even simpler. First, download the program to your computer from airstream.io/download (there are versions for Windows, Apple Mac and Linux). There's nothing to configure and if you are asked to sign up or log in, just click the Skip link and don't bother. It isn't necessary for devices on the same network.

Go to the Google Play Store on Android phones and tablets, or the Apple App Store on the iPhone and iPad, and install AirStream. As with the PC version, when you're asked to log in, you can tap the Skip link or you connect to your PC by scanning the QR code on the screen. The app will find the computer and you can browse the contents of the hard drive.

Navigate to your music folder, such as C:\Users\YourName\Music, and tap a music file to play it. As the music is playing, tap the music icon at the top to make a new screen appear displaying the usual playback controls. Tap the Add button to add the track to a playlist and create lists of your favourite music. A Playlist button is then added to the music screen.

Playing videos is just as easy on the iPhone and iPad, but it's slightly different on Android devices. AirStream handles the streaming, but not the video playing. Navigate to the folder that contains your videos, such as C:\Users\YourName\Videos, and tap a video. You are asked which

Use AirStream to browse for and play media files on line or on your PC

ES File Explorer lets you browse your PC's hard drive and play music and videos

video player you want to use from the list of video players installed on the device, such as MX Player or VLC. The chosen app will then open to play the file.

AirStream on phones and tablets can connect to Dropbox, Google Drive or OneDrive and play the media files. Just select Cloud, choose the service, and connect to it. You can then browse and play the media files.

Share your media files

Windows has built-in sharing tools but they may not be enabled. Right-click the network icon at the right side of the taskbar and select 'Open Network and Sharing Center'. Click 'Change advanced sharing settings'. There are three expandable sections called Private, 'Guest or Public' and All Networks. Open each one and turn on 'Network discovery', 'File and printer sharing' and 'Public folder sharing' so anyone can access the Public folder. Turn off 'Password-protected sharing'.

What this means is that any computer, phone or tablet on the network can access the contents of the C:\Users\Public folder. Put your photos, videos and music in there so that they can be accessed by other computers and devices. Install ES file Explorer (bit.ly/esfile373) on an Android phone or tablet, for example, go to the app's menu and select Network. Tap the Scan icon at the bottom and then select your computer. Now you can browse the Public folder and play any music or video file. Try FileExplorer Free on the iPhone and iPad to access the PC and play media files in the same way.

Ask the Expert

Roland Waddilove, computer programmer and PC journalist since 1981, answers all your technical questions. Email us for help at webuser@dennis.co.uk
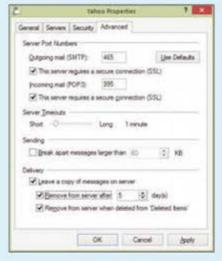
EMAIL

Disappearing emails

Q In an effort to find an alternative to Live Mail, I am running three email programs on my laptop, all sharing the same email address and account/security details. The strange thing is that the programs don't receive the same incoming messages. What am I doing wrong?

Brian Thurling, via email

A When you run an email program, it connects to the mail server and downloads the emails. In most cases, it also deletes those emails off the server. This is what's causing your problem because once one email program has deleted the email from the server, it's not there for the next program to download. The emails only appear in one program and each program has a different set of messages.

One solution is to configure all the programs to not delete emails on the server. In Windows Live Mail, for example, right-click the account name in the left panel and select Properties in the menu. Select the Advanced tab in the window and, at the bottom, tick 'Leave a copy of messages on server' and 'Remove from server when

Tick all options in the Delivery section to give access to other mail programs

deleted from Deleted Items'. You can also tick 'Remove from server after' and specify a number of days.

You may be better off switching to webmail, such as Outlook, Gmail and Yahoo Mail. These services are designed to be accessed by multiple programs and devices, such as PCs, tablets and phones. Sign up and add your current email account in Settings, Accounts and Import. Whether you access your webmail account on a phone, tablet or computer, it will show the same emails.

SECURITY

PrivDog safety?

Q I read with interest *Web User*'s comments about PrivDog in issue 369 (bit.ly/webuser369). I have been using the Comodo Dragon (bit.ly/dragon373) browser since your magazine recommended it several years ago as a safer alternative to Chrome and other browsers. PrivDog comes already installed on the Comodo Dragon browser, so does this

PrivDog replaces adverts on websites with its own

mean it is no longer safe to use? If it isn't, what would be a better alternative browser?

Ruth Whitehouse, via email

A A flaw was discovered in PrivDog that made it possible to intercept secure SSL connections used by websites when they add the padlock and use https:// instead of the usual insecure http://. Banks, shops and lots of other sites use https://

for security.

The problem was limited to two specific versions of the PrivDog software –v3.0.96.0 and v3.0.97.0 (bit.ly/priv373). All other versions are fine. Comodo's web browser does not use either of the versions that are affected by the security flaw, so you can carry on using it, but anyone that has downloaded PrivDog from the PrivDog website could be affected.

It's impossible to completely stamp out security flaws but keeping software up to date is the best way to combat hackers, malware and spyware. The latest version of PrivDog (4.0.26) should be safe for use. Saying that, we don't particularly like PrivDog because it replaces adverts on websites with its own, and we don't recommend Comodo Dragon because it comes bundled with PrivDog.

If you're concerned about your privacy, you could explore the privacy settings in either Chrome or Firefox and choose a balance that's right for you. Or if you're very serious about privacy, try the Tor Browser (bit.ly/tor373), which is based on Firefox but has more privacy tools.

GENERAL PC

Shut down faster

Q I have been using my Windows 7 PC for about two years. It has been almost trouble-free, but is now taking a long time to shut down. Can you help?

Joe Pester, via email

A This is one of those problems that has so many possible causes that we can only give general advice.

Many programs and services run in the background in Windows and when the computer is asked to shut down, they must all be stopped. Programs and services should all quit within a few seconds, but a bug could be delaying or stopping a program shutting down. Eliminating unnecessary background programs and services and updating the rest to their newest versions should remove any bugs. Go to the Control Panel and use Windows Update to check

for and install any updates, including optional ones, which are not installed by default and might fix a bug that's been found in one of your programs.

Try installing Driver Booster 2 Free (bit.ly/boost373). When this is run, it checks all the drivers on your PC for updates, which are then downloaded and installed. Also, download and install Wise Program Uninstaller (bit.ly/wise373). Use it to go through all the software installed on the PC and uninstall anything you can live without.

If that doesn't solve the problem, there are some Registry tweaks that might help. Press Windows+R, type `regedit` and press Enter. Go to:

HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SYSTEM\CurrentControlSet\Control

Look for an item on the right called 'WaitToKillServiceTimeout'. If it doesn't exist, select Edit, New, String Value and create it. Double-click it and set it to 5000. Then go to:

HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Control Panel\Desktop

If you can't find 'WaitToKillServiceTimeout' on the right, select Edit, New, String Value and create it. Double-click it and set it to 5000. At the same Registry location, create another String Value and name it 'AutoEndTasks'. Double-click it and set it to 1. These Registry settings will force the apps to quit.

INTERNET
Will Pi-hole block cashback sites?

Q In Issue 370 (bit.ly/webusermag370) you talk about using a Raspberry Pi to block ads on your network without using any software. I think this is a great idea, but will it affect services such as Quidco (www.quidco.com), which offers cashback by tracking your online purchase and then paying you cash back.
Zack Jenkin, via email

A Pi-hole (pi-hole.net) on the Raspberry Pi works by loading a web page and then checking each of the

A Raspberry Pi can be used to block adverts on all your devices

URLs that it links to. If a URL is a known advertiser, then it is blocked. Quidco is not a supplier of adverts so it shouldn't appear on the Pi-hole advertiser list and therefore won't be blocked.

SECURITY
Microsoft malware callers

Q Someone phoned me claiming to be from Microsoft Tech Support. They told me that my Windows laptop contained malware, and got me to open Event Viewer and select Custom Views, then Administrative Events. No errors and warnings were present.

Then they got me to do two downloads, claiming this would let me detect the malware. I was then told to return to Event Viewer and select Custom Views, then Administrative Events. Hundreds of 'errors' and 'warnings' appeared. I also gave them Remote Access to my PC. They offered to fix the problem for €10. At this stage I realised it was a scam.

I'm now trying to get rid of the errors. I used Kaspersky Internet Security, but it hasn't worked. I also used free data destruction software called CBL Data Shredder, but that didn't work either.

Does my laptop actually contain malware? Is it possible to delete the errors and warnings from Event Viewer? Is it safe to make online purchases?
Peter Claxton, via email

A Microsoft *never* calls people to tell them they have malware on their PC. If anyone calls, whether they say they are from Microsoft or anywhere else, just hang up.

By giving the caller control of your

Emsisoft Emergency Kit is compatible with other anti-virus software

computer, you have allowed them to install malware on it. Do not use it for any internet activity until it has been cleaned because it could be sending them login details for your online shopping, banking and other accounts.

In this situation, it is best to get confirmation from at least three different anti-virus programs that the computer is clean. Select the most thorough and deep scan available in Kaspersky, then download and run Emsisoft Free Emergency Kit (www.emsisoft.com) and Malwarebytes Anti-Malware (www.malwarebytes.org).

Some types of malware can only be removed using a rescue CD. Get AVG Rescue CD (bit.ly/avgrescue373) or Avira Rescue CD (bit.ly/avira373). Burn one of them to CD-R using software such as CDBurnerXP (cdburnerxp.se), then start the PC with the rescue disc in the drive. PCs are usually set up to start from a disc in the drive if one is present, but if not, look out on your screen for the function key (F2, F8 or F12) you need to press to get to the boot menu options.

If all scans come up clean, you are okay. Don't worry about anything listed in Event Viewer.

GAMES CONSOLES
X-Box sound is muffled

Q I have a Samsung smart TV, but when I run my Xbox One through it, the sound comes out muffled and I have to turn the volume up high. Is there anything I can do?
Wayne Lewis, via email

A This problem is sometimes caused by incorrect settings on the Xbox One. On the home screen, go to Settings and select Display & Sound. Select HDMI Audio or Optical Audio, depending on the connection you use.

Boost the sound from an Xbox One by setting it to 'Stereo uncompressed'

If you have a home cinema speaker set-up, select '5.1 uncompressed' or '7.1 uncompressed'. The 'Stereo uncompressed' is a general setting that works with everything else.

This fortnight Roland used RescueTime (www.rescuetime.com) to confirm that he wastes too much time on Facebook

Your Top Tips

Our pick of the best advice from our readers. To get help or offer it to others, visit forum.webuser.co.uk

TOP TIP

£25 winner

ANDROID

Use an external drive with your tablet

I have recently started using an Android tablet (after many years using Microsoft Windows and Linux Ubuntu), but found that none of my external hard drives were compatible with it. I used an on-the-go (OTG) cable to connect the hard drive to my tablet but, although it recognised that there was a connection, the format was incompatible. I have since discovered that this is because the hard drives were formatted to NTFS (a file format preferred by Windows) whereas, to work with Android, they needed to be FAT32.

I have a spare hard drive so I copied all the content on my other drives to it before formatting each drive to FAT32 and then copying the files back again from the spare drive. It took hours (days, even!), but my Android tablet now recognises all the content on my drives, which means I can copy music,

Use a cheap OTG cable to connect a hard drive to your Android device

video, photographs and more to the tablet.

Most importantly, the hard drives still work well with Microsoft Windows 7 and Linux Ubuntu. Remember, you must back up the content of your hard drive before altering the file format to FAT32, otherwise you'll lose everything!

Jeff Dingle, via email

BROWSERS
Run Chrome apps offline

Chrome can do a lot more than browse the web and the Chrome Web Store (bit .ly/webstore373) has lots of useful apps and extensions. Half way down the left-hand menu is a tick box labelled Runs Offline. Tick it to display apps that don't need an internet connection, which includes everything from Angry Birds to calendars and notepads.

Lots of Chrome apps work without an internet connection, including Angry Birds

These could be useful in parts of the country with a poor broadband signal (or no signal at all), and for laptop and Chromebook owners who travel or just like to sit in the garden on a sunny day and are just out of reach of their Wi-Fi.
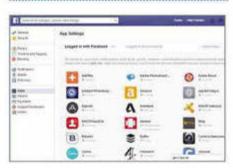
Joey Buick, via email

SECURITY
Block app access to Facebook

Facebook is often used as a method for logging into games, websites, apps and other services. The question is: do all the things you've allowed to access your Facebook account in the past still need access to it now? If you no longer play a game or use a website, you can revoke its permission to access your data. The fewer things that have access, the more secure and private your account.

Every so often, you should go to Facebook, click the menu button in the top-right corner and select Settings.

Do all these apps need access to your Facebook account? Delete any that don't

Select Apps in the panel on the left and, on the right, you'll see some of the apps that can access your account. Click the Show All button to reveal all of them. Move the mouse over an app to make a cross appear on the right. Click this cross to delete any app you no longer need.

M. Gibbons, via email

GENERAL PC
Type your emoji

Would you like to be able to type emoji characters using a keyboard? If you have a newer Windows 8.1 laptop with a touchscreen, you can. Click the keyboard icon on the right of the taskbar to make a keyboard appear on the screen. Click or tap the Emoji button, and you can now simply click or tap the characters you want to insert.

Lyn Morris, via email

Touchscreen PCs have a pop-up keyboard that provides easy access to emoji
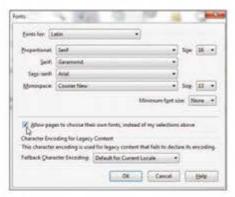
BROWSERS
Customise website fonts

Did you know that Firefox lets you change the way fonts appear on websites? Most websites use CSS to tell your browser which fonts to display, but Firefox lets you override these settings with a single click of a button.

Unfortunately, you can't specify which fonts you use for different sites – it's just a blanket rule that's turned on or off. To use the feature, click the menu button, then Options and select the Content panel. In the Fonts & Colors area, choose the font and size you'd like to use before clicking Advanced and unticking the box labelled 'Allow pages to choose their own fonts, instead of my selections above'. Click OK and OK again to exit. When you now refresh the sites you're browsing, they'll display your favourite fonts.

Dangermouse75, Web User Forums

Firefox lets you use your own fonts for any websites you visit

LINUX
Check you have the correct time in Linux

One of the best things about Linux is that you can download your chosen operating system (often called a 'distro') as an ISO file and burn it to a CD or DVD. You can then boot up your PC with the distro to try it out. It runs from the optical disc and not the PC's hard drive, so it doesn't change anything in Windows. When you take out the disc, you can boot into Windows as normal.

One thing you have to watch out for is the time. I have found that some Linux Live CDs go online and set the clock an hour wrong. They set it to GMT (Greenwich Mean Time) or UTC (coordinated universal time), which is an hour behind British Summer Time. On occasion, I have only realised this when I restarted Windows and noticed the clock on the taskbar was an hour slow! It's not a serious problem, because you can put the clock right in Windows or Linux simply by clicking it, but it's something to watch out for.

Graham Beasley, via email

SOCIAL
See how many times your tweets have been read

If you're interested in knowing how many impressions and engagements your tweets have, this information is available for free via Twitter's 'tweet activity' dashboard. To activate the feature, visit analytics.twitter.com/accounts and turn on analytics for your account. Once you've done that, you'll see a summary of stats about your account including tweet impressions and profile views on the homepage. Click Tweets to see a more detailed breakdown of the impressions and engagements for each of your posts.

When you've activated analytics, you'll also be able to find the information about your tweets using the iOS and Android smartphone apps. Simply visit your profile and you'll see a chart icon under each tweet. Tap this and you'll be taken to its 'tweet activity' page.

Ed Wright, via email

WEBSITES
Personalise your debit card

Apparently it's been available for some time but I've only just found out that if you have a Barclays bank account, you can personalise your debit card with a picture of your choice. You need to visit personalisedcard.barclays.co.uk to complete the application and there are a few rules that you need to pay attention to (for example, you need to own the copyright for the image unless you pick one from those included in the Barclays image gallery).

Provided your application is successful, it takes about one working week for your new card to arrive, at which point you'll need to destroy your old one. The new card will have a different number to your previous one, so remember to update your debit card details on any websites that keep them saved.

Angus Donald, via email

Barclays lets you design your own personalised debit card

APPS
Make calls from abroad for free

My son has been using Whatsapp for ages, but I've only recently discovered the benefits of using the mobile messenger app. As long as you have an internet connection, you can use it to send messages, pictures and videos, and it's even been updated recently to let you make free calls to other Whatsapp users. This means I can send pictures to my friends and loved ones at no cost when I go abroad, as long as I use a free Wi-Fi connection.

Many people I know already use the app, so I can get hold of more friends using its free calling feature than I used to be able to using Skype. Even when I'm back home, the app can be really handy when I'm somewhere that has no phone signal, because by simply connecting to a Wi-Fi network, I can make calls and send messages. If you have a limited mobile data allowance, keep an eye on how much you're sending and being sent by others, because you don't want to start racking up a big bill.

Dawn Smith, via email

Whatsapp lets you stay in touch with friends for free using a web connection

SECURITY
Check shortened links before clicking them

If you're concerned that a shortened link may take you somewhere you'd rather not go, there are a couple of add-ons that can replace the shortened link with a full URL so you can find out exactly where they lead.

For Firefox or Pale Moon, try Long URL Please (bit.ly/longurl373). This add-on replaces all shortened links with the full links when it loads a web page.

For Chrome or Opera, try LongURL (bit.ly/longurlchrome373). This extension will show you the real URL when you hold your mouse pointer over the link, and it also replaces shortened links in the Location Bar with their full URLs.

I use both of these services and they work fine. I decided to post this tip after reading about fake Bitly links.

Madeline, Web User Forums

Readers' Helpdesk

Our pick of the best solutions posted on our reader forums. Visit forum.webuser.co.uk – it's friendly and free!

MOBILE

Why can't I use Avast's firewall on Android?

Q I've just bought a new Android smartphone and downloaded Avast Mobile Security (bit.ly/avast373) but I can't make its firewall work. When I try to set it up, an error message advises that I need 'root access'. I have no idea what this means or how to resolve it. Can anyone help?
grumpy old man, Web User Forums

A Android doesn't work in the same way as Windows. It's Linux-based and uses a closed system, which means you can only download and run apps from Google's Play store (unless you change the default settings).

Furthermore, the inner workings of the operating system are closed off as a safety measure, which is why you can't use Avast's firewall without acquiring what is known as 'root access'. It's not especially difficult to root your device, but I wouldn't recommend it because it will void your warranty and (in a worst-case scenario) can result in the device failing altogether. You may find it frustrating that you can't use the app's firewall, but Android's inherent safety mechanisms mean you shouldn't need it anyway.

Avast's Mobile Security app can't really be compared to your PC security software. The only threat to Android devices is via apps installed from insecure sources (essentially, anywhere except the Google Play store), so if you stick to the Play store, you should be fine.
succulent95 and izzit, Web User Forums

NoRoot Firewall lets you stop apps accessing the web without having to root your Android device

GENERAL PC

Can I install Windows 8.1 using a Windows 8 product key?

Q I want to perform a clean installation of Windows 8.1 on my PC, but I only have a product key for Windows 8, which I understand will not work with Windows 8.1 installation media. Can I download an ISO file for Windows 8 so that I can then upgrade it to Windows 8.1?
Euroned, Web User Forums

Windows 8's built-in Reset option is the simplest method of carrying out a clean installation

A You can find set-up wizards for both Windows 8 and 8.1 at bit.ly/setup373. But have you thought about using the operating system's built-in Reset option? Windows 8 introduced this as a new way of letting you reinstall the operating system (see izzit's forum post about it at bit.ly/reinstall373), which is much more straightforward than older methods.

If you're using a Windows 8 laptop with a recovery partition, it'll restore Windows 8, but otherwise it'll reinstall Windows 8.1 (providing you've upgraded).

If you don't want to use the Reset option, there's a Winhelp.us article at bit.ly/installwindows373 that can help you create a bootable Windows 8.1 ISO disc, which you can later activate with your Windows 8 key. Just make sure you don't format your hard drive first.
mikec1, Cantrel and izzit, Web User Forums

Web User **says:** If you want to block specific apps from accessing the internet without rooting your device, try NoRoot Firewall (bit.ly/noroot373).

HARDWARE

Where can I buy a reliable replacement laptop battery?

Q I am interested in buying a replacement battery for my Dell Studio laptop, but they don't seem to be available on the Dell website. Can anyone recommend a supplier? I have previously bought a cheap one on eBay but it didn't last long.
betty, Web User Forums

A I think it would best if you contacted Dell (0844 4444712) to ask for their recommendation, otherwise you risk ending up with a cheap, poor-quality reproduction. Also, it's worth considering whether you actually need a new battery.

I never take my laptop anywhere that it can't be plugged in and its original battery still provides 20-30 minutes of power, which is enough to move it to a different plug. If you decide to buy a new battery, either an original or a replacement, I can recommend www.laptopsandspares.com.
Cantrel, izzit, Teddyboy, Web User Forums

Laptopsandspares.com sells a large range of original and replacement laptop batteries

Star Email

Stop dumbing down the English language

I find it very sad that people now feel the need to rely on devices such as emoji (FAQ, Issue 372, bit.ly/webuser372) to convey their emotions rather than expressing them through words. Text messaging, Facebook and Twitter have combined to reduce the English language to abbreviations and pictures, because it would appear that nobody wants to read or write traditional, properly spelled words anymore. As one of your correspondents in the letters page wrote, there's a time and a place for internet gimmicks such as hashtags, but when they start to spread beyond websites to be used in real-world situations, then I really do despair for this generation and the next.

I am fully aware that electronic communication is a restrictive medium and that for the sake of brevity and speed, it is sometimes necessary to abbreviate words or replace them with a picture. However, I fear that these childish elements are becoming the norm and are being ridiculously overused – not just by young people, but by a high proportion of web users.

When our ancestors sent telegrams to convey messages quickly over distances, they chose and cut words appropriately to save time and money, but they still knew how to spell the original versions. These days, it seems language is mangled just for the sake of it or because the 'writer' can't be bothered to type a message in full. That said, judging by the atrocious spelling and grammar on social-networking sites, this might not necessarily be a bad thing.

I realise I must sound like a grumpy old fuddy-duddy, but the English language is so rich in beautiful and evocative words that it depresses me to see it reduced to plz, cya, thx and other awful, lexical abuses. We should treasure our vocabulary not destroy it.

Geoffrey Skinner, via email

Winner takes all

I recently tried the casino rooms at a website called Winner (www.winner.co.uk). It had given me a free £30 bonus to play with, provided that I made a deposit. After an hour of playing, the free money was removed by the website. I had made £5 winnings but would have had to deposit £150 (that is, five times as much as the initial bonus) to get this.

I tried to withdraw just my original deposit of £20, which was still in my account, but the website would not let me. I phoned the site's customer services and they said I needed to verify my account by sending a copy of my passport. The next day, I still could not withdraw my deposit and customer services told me to send my address. The following day was the same, but now they asked for a copy of the front and back of my credit card.

I am very concerned about this for reasons of of identity theft and data-protection. Also, Winner sent me an email telling me something was wrong with my account verification. It is funny how the site does not need this verification before it lets you deposit money. I still don't have my deposit and Winner has fraudulently used my card details to take £600 from my account.

There are other gambling websites also offering free bonus money, but if you want to withdraw money you also have to deposit five times the bonus amount, and then forfeit the bonus. Why can't they pay out more and give no bonus money?

Adrian Bonnington, via email

Unsure whether to go on the Windows 10 adventure

My dilemma is, in the words of The Clash, 'Should I Stay or Should I Go?'. This morning, when switching on my computer and letting it do the usual checks, I noticed a small Windows icon on the bottom bar. When I hovered my mouse over it, it said 'Get Windows 10'.

Is this legit or is it a scam? There seems to be no way of knowing. It looks legit, but no-one has said that's the way Windows 10 is coming to you for free; not *Web User* nor any other computer magazine that I know of.

In any event, I might be allergic to this program anyway. Will it destroy my current programs which I am not prepared to start backing up and fiddling about with? I had trouble with my Windows 8 laptop so I sold it and bought a nice 12.2 Galaxy Pro Android tablet, which solved the problem.
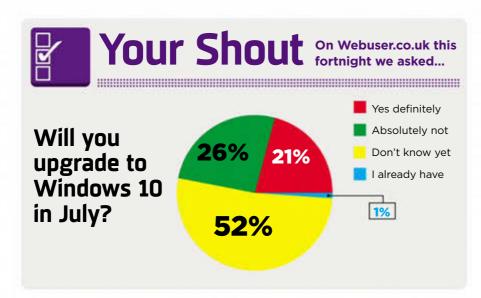
I have had Windows 7 for many years

You can let us know your views and opinions via:
webuser@dennis.co.uk, www.facebook.com/webusermagazine,
www.twitter.com/webusermagazine and forum.webuser.co.uk

Your Shout
On Webuser.co.uk this fortnight we asked...

Will you upgrade to Windows 10 in July?

- 🔴 Yes definitely
- 🟢 Absolutely not
- 🟡 Don't know yet
- 🔵 I already have

26% · 21% · 52% · 1%

and have no problems with it. Do I need to let myself in for possible aggravation? Even if this Windows 10 upgrade is legit, I don't want it if it means losing the use of my programs. I have what would now be called a middling computer with 8GB of RAM and a 250GB hard drive. I do not download films, only updates and software and some music – all legit. I don't do a lot, but I have no problems

and that's the way I like it.

To summarise, is this Windows 10 offer legit and, if so, do I really want it?

Martin Fletcher, via email

Web User replies: We can confirm that the 'Get Windows 10' icon is a legitimate notification from Microsoft to reserve your free upgrade to the new operating system (see page 8). As to whether you

take up the offer, we'll be reviewing Windows 10 in *Web User* closer to its release date on 29 July. We hope that helps you decide.

Why the Chromecast is smarter than a smart TV
I enjoyed Barry's article about smart TVs in Issue 371 (bit.ly/webuser371) and found it amusing and helpful. I bought my Sony smart TV towards the end of 2010, at which time there was no Chromecast or Amazon Fire Stick. Also, Sky boxes didn't do all they do nowadays (box sets, buy and keep movies, catch-up and so on). I'm just giving my reasons for buying my smart TV, and plead that I was trying something that was, at the time, brand new and high tech.

I did feel a wally though when they discontinued the YouTube app on my Sony Smart TV because that (as well as Amazon Instant Video) was

What you say...

WILL YOU USE GOOGLE'S NEW PHOTOS SERVICE (photos.google.com)?

There must be catch somewhere. I suspect ads will appear somewhere down the line if it's a free service.
Martin James

I will definitely use this service. It's unlimited and free! I'm also looking forward to the next issue of *Web User*.
Henry Penfold @penfoldno1

If it's as good as Google Drive, it will be brilliant.
Rob Goldring

I've been using it since an hour or so after it was released. It's very good, though I've not seen the People filter yet.
Rob @robjohn_c

It looks promising, although there's bound to be a clause somewhere stating that Google will reserve the right to share your images. Otherwise, yes please!
Jason 'Boz' Bowyer

SHOULD TEXT SPEAK, SUCH AS 'LOLZ', BE ALLOWED IN SCRABBLE?

I'm playing Scrabble right now and with the letters I've got, I think they should allow "guvtiim"
Peter Fitzsimmons

It's an abbreviation, so no it's not allowed in Scrabble and the rules shouldn't be changed.
John Wells

If you are going to allow LOLZ, you have to allow IOU, BRB, PTO etc. So no.
Chris Armstrong

Oh no, no, no. Maybe let the kids have their own text-speak edition of Scrabble. Just don't involve us adults.
Ady Colclough @Adycolclough

Good lord – no!
Richard Morgan

WHAT DO YOU THINK THE 'M' IN ANDROID M SHOULD STAND FOR?

Mars or Milky Way. Or a curveball 'My' as in 'My Android'.
DelAliGus @delaligus

Marshmallow.
Matt Cummings @ClaphamKiwi

Mango.
Nagateja @imnagateja

the app I used most.

However, thanks to your article all was not lost. I went to Currys and bought a Chromecast for £25 and can now happily stream (or should I say 'cast') YouTube on my TV again. In fact YouTube is better via Chromecast than through the original app on my smart TV, because it includes YouTube videos that the app didn't. I've also been enjoying casting Google Play from my Chromecast.

Thanks for your informative and useful article. I was feeling pretty downcast at losing YouTube on my TV but now I'm happy again! Keep up the good work.

Lynn Sharpe, Norfolk

Smart TVs are a load of rubbish

I couldn't agree more with Barry's column about smart TVs. A couple of years ago, I bought a Sony Bravia 40in smart TV, ably encouraged by an equally "smart talking" sales assistant. I thought I was keeping up with the latest trends and this was going to be the next big thing in TV. Two years on and all I use is the iPlayer app. The rest is either rubbish or you have to subscribe (an expensive process if, like me, the purpose of a TV is

to provide a bit of occasional relaxation in the evening). I want to access ITV Player and the newer apps from the likes of the Drama channel but I've got no chance – at least, I have no idea how. You can forget using the web, too, because using the TV remote to enter a URL is a joke, although the VGA socket is useful for using it as a monitor for my laptop.

And who thought Skype would be useful on a TV with no camera or microphone? Clearly Sony did. There's no chance of upgrading the services either; if only I could plug the laptop into the USB port and download the services I want.

The technology really does need to

improve. The picture quality is good, though, which is one saving grace, I suppose.

Stephen Moore, London

Who needs a smart TV anyway?

Thanks to Barry for his very interesting and amusing article about not-so-smart TVs. I think I dodged the problem about 10 years ago when I simply stuck my trusty PC in a cabinet and linked it with my TV using a £2 HDMI cable. Besides saving the cost of buying a monitor, it gives me access to iPlayer, YouTube, games and the whole world of the internet on a big screen. I can still sit on the sofa and control it with a wireless mouse and keyboard.

It's very useful when there is nothing on the goggle box - or should that be goggle panel?

Ian Mitchell, via email

Don't get a shock from gadget repairs

Having watched the Nexus 7 repair tutorial on YouTube (bit.ly/nexus371), which was featured in Your Top Tips in Issue 371, I was quite concerned that there was no regard paid to ESD (electrostatic discharge). Having experienced the destructive potential of static electricity that can build up in our bodies, I would certainly urge anyone doing electronic repairs to wear an earth-bonding strap to ensure the item under repair is safe from discharge. Perhaps a *Web User* article on the subject may be warranted.

Richard Sowden, via email

Meringue.

Michael Holden

Macarism: taking pleasure in another's joy.

Ian John Nee

Muffin. It was on the tip of my tongue.

David38UK @DavidUK38

Mud pies. That's a kind of dessert.

Elliot Head

McVitie's. Well, they have done KitKat.

Russ @russty_russ

WILL YOU USE CORTANA ON YOUR ANDROID OR IPHONE (bit.ly/cort373)?

Yes I would, particularly if it is as well integrated with iOS as Windows 10. Sounds like a big improvement over the supercilious Siri.

Ian Phipps

Nah, BlackBerry Assistant already does the job for me, not that I think talking to your phone makes you look a bit daft!

Paul Wallace

I'll use it if it can understand me. I can't use the Desktop version because it doesn't recognise my Black Country accent.

Ethel Ethel @EthelEthel

Well I would certainly try it. I have both Android and iOS, and Siri is no better than Google.

Harvey @haskipsey

I'd ask her where Siri was.

Si Mellor

Apparently it's more intuitive. If this is the case, then yes.

Matt McCallion

No.

Joe Joiner @joejoinerr

✚ Air your views, write to us at webuser@dennis.co.uk

⚠ Page 404

A chastened Barry Collins says it's time to park our fears about self-driving vehicles

Hand over the wheel to Google

Think you're a safe driver? Well, you're not. You can't be. You're human. You get distracted by text messages, by billboards, by Sandi Toksvig on the *News Quiz*. Your reaction times are appalling. If a pedestrian walks out in front of you on a busy high street, you'll probably hit them before you've seen them, because you're likely to be driving too fast. Nobody really does 30mph in built-up areas, do they? Despite being told that they're five times more likely to kill the poor soul they've hit at 40mph than if they stick to the speed limit.

I learned all this on a dreaded Speed Awareness Course in the same week that Google released safety statistics about its self-driving cars. Google took an enormous amount of flak from the told-you-so brigade when, following suggestions that it had been covering up accidents, the company admitted that its driverless cars had been involved in 11 prangs since they started driving on public roads in the US.

That sounds quite alarming until you break down the statistics. Google has been testing its 20-strong fleet of self-driving vehicles for six years, and on public roads since the beginning of 2012. Cumulatively, they've clocked up 1.7 million miles (although not always driving autonomously) and in all that time, with cutting-edge, prototype technology that's performing one of the most complex artificial intelligence tasks imaginable, they've only had 11 accidents. Nobody died, nobody was even hurt. And, according to Google, all 11 accidents were caused by the other driver.

Now, granted, 20 cars driving 1.7 million miles is still a comparatively small sample. British road accidents are measured in billions of miles – 498 casualties per billion vehicle miles in 2012, since you ask – which equates to roughly one casualty for every 2 million miles. Google's cars aren't even statistically safer than you and me yet.

However, we can say with some confidence that there are certain common types of road accident that Google isn't ever likely to be at fault for. Google cars won't add to the death toll of around 200 people killed on Britain's roads every year by cars exceeding the speed limit, because they're programmed not to. A Google vehicle is much less likely to be involved in the most common type of crash – the rear-end smash – because it's got a barrage of sensors that keep it a safe stopping distance from the car in front. Google's cars certainly won't contribute to the 3,000 annual deaths or serious injuries caused by drink driving.

More than 1,700 people were killed on our roads in 2013 – the equivalent of roughly four 747s full of passengers. If four commercial jets dropped out of the sky over Britain every year, we'd be talking about an aviation crisis that would cripple the tourist industry. So why don't planes crash as often as cars? Because, as the cliché goes, the planes virtually fly themselves these days.

Self-driving cars will inevitably kill someone someday, just as the auto-pilot occasionally goes wrong on commercial jets, with catastrophic results. But when I'm travelling down a rainy motorway on a dismal January night, I'd rather have Google at the wheel of the car behind than you. And it can have the keys to my car, too.

> ❝ Google's cars certainly won't contribute to the 3,000 annual deaths or serious injuries caused by drink driving ❞

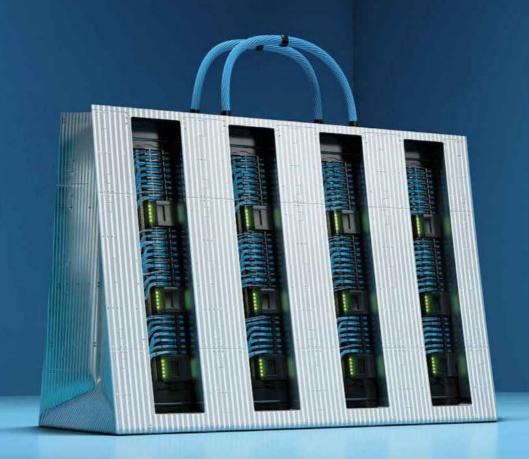➕ Do you agree? Let us know at webuser@dennis.co.uk

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